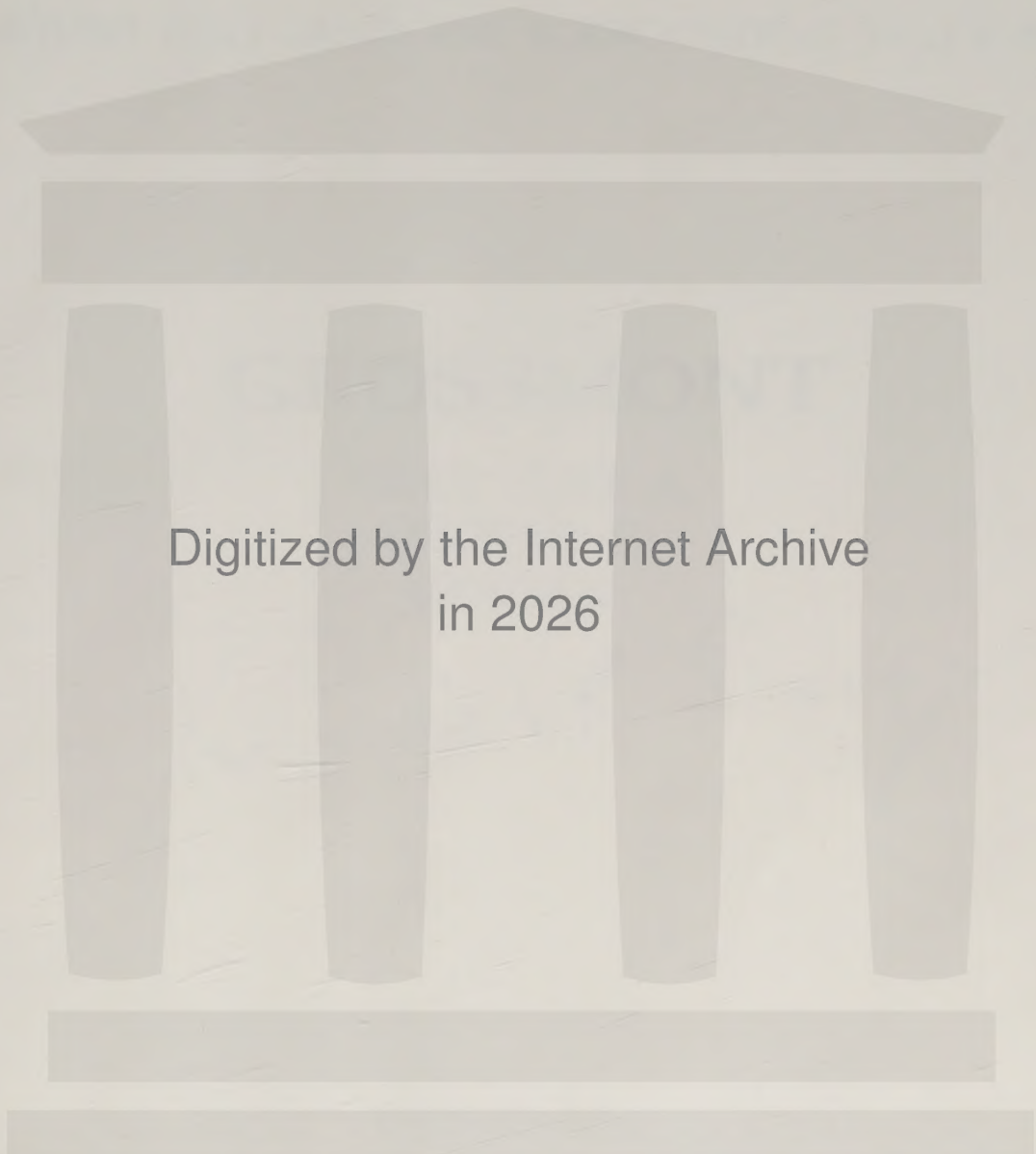
Recollections of GROSSMONT, MOUNT HELIX and Surrounding Valleys

GROSSMONT ISN'T JUST A SHOPPING CENTER

Hubert Guy



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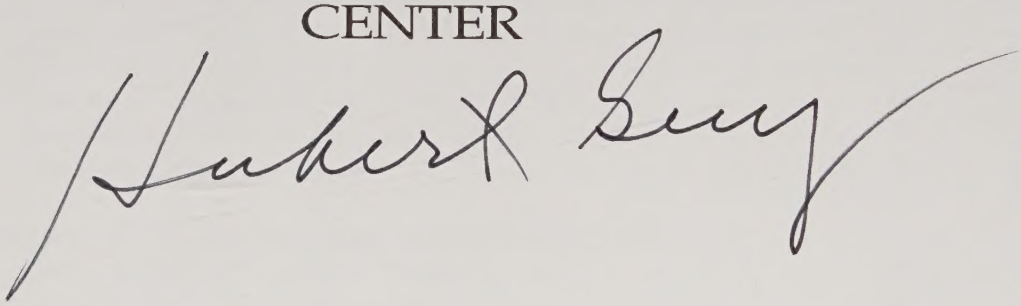
A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF GROSSMONT,
MOUNT HELIX AND THE SURROUNDING VALLEYS

GROSSMONT

ISN'T JUST A SHOPPING CENTER



HUBERT GUY

FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION
"Grossmont and Mount Helix prior to development — 1902." Courtesy of Ed Fletcher Photographic Collection, U.C.S.D., La Jolla, California.

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From the turn of this century until the 'teens, road signs were simple, hand-painted posters, some elaborate, others crude. In 1914, the only sign necessary for directions to Grossmont was the wooden panel held by Zelda Vernier, Mickey McCann, and Thelma Jones Todd, as shown in the photo at the left.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

As increased automobile traffic demanded more networks of roads, improved enamel signs produced by the Automobile Club of Southern California effectively directed the increasing number of cars. During the 1930s when the state government assumed production of road signs, directions to Grossmont seemed to disappear. The sign shown in the 1932 photo at the right was among the last pointing to Grossmont.

GROSSMONT ISN'T JUST A SHOPPING CENTER!

"Grossmont — near Mount Helix, isn't it?"

This query, heard more and more as time goes by, indicates a dimmed recognition of Grossmont's existence. Many believe the area originally created and developed by Ed Fletcher as Grossmont is included in the area which now is generally described as Mount Helix. This conclusion is understandable since the identity of Mount Helix is well-established by the highly visible Cross crowning its summit while the identity of its neighboring mountain, Grossmont, has become a misty, undefined area perpetuated mainly by a few monolithic reminders such as Grossmont Hospital, Grossmont High School, and the popular Grossmont Shopping Center.

A change in name preference for a particular locale is usually brought about by popular demand. For example, daily lives continued uninterrupted when the Santa Monica valley became El Cajon; there was no public clamor when the villages of Foster and El Monte quietly merged into the village of Lakeside; Allison Springs became La Mesa Springs, then La Mesa, without incident. Since it is not outside the realm of possibility that Grossmont's fading idenity may ultimately blend into the popular Mount Helix identity, it seems fitting to record some of the early events associated with Grossmont and her neighbors before they become forgotten memories.

Predictably, many changes occurred during the early years of Grossmont's development. For ten years after Ed Fletcher's acquisition of the property in 1902, he brought water and utilities to the summit and laid out and landscaped homesites radiating from a winding road he built to the top. And he created a "Colony for Artists " concept that attracted famous entertainment personalities who invested in Grossmont property thereby assuring a self-propelling future for the development.

Then, during the 'teen years, Fletcher became highly active in other civic endeavors such as land and water developments, highway projects, military functions, and state politics which reduced the time available for his Grossmont and Mount Helix projects although his strong influence in their progress continued. Wiliam Gross, his partner in the original Grossmont land purchase, retired from active participation in 1911, then politely refused Fletcher's offer in 1915 to join him in the development of Mount Helix. During this period, unexpected tragedies

Ed Fletcher and Madame Schumann-Heink, shown in this 1914 photograph, were very instrumental in the successful development of Grossmont and Mount Helix. The mere mention of the name Grossmont brings to mind the name Ed Fletcher who first envisioned the small, boulder- strewn mountain east of San Diego as a potential beauty spot filled with exclusive residential sites. When he became heavily involved in other important civic projects which limited his time available for the Grossmont development, Madame Schumann-Heink kept interest alive in the area.

weakened the optimistic forecast for the success of the Colony for Artists as the untimely deaths of Theresa Carreno and Johanna Gadski cancelled construction of their Grossmont homes. Carrie Jacobs Bond moved the bulk of activities to her Hollywood home. Owen Wister never occupied his completed home after the sudden death of his wife changed their retirement plans. Bill Gross and Havrah Hubbard quietly slipped into semi-retirement.

World War I and its aftermath slowed Grossmont's progress. Only Madame Schumann-Heink's home and Ed Fletcher's Grossmont Inn continued to attract increasing numbers of visitors as their respective reputations grew. As the years rolled into the twenties, activities which once were directed at Grossmont turned to a more rapid development of Mount Helix with construction of the beautiful Nature Theatre, the completion of Helix Lake in the valley between the twin mountains, and beginning of new residential developments such as Calavo Gardens.

Everything was dampened by the Great Depression, but by then the future of Grossmont and Mount Helix as beautiful residential areas was firmly established.

WHEN LIVING MEMORIES FADE . . .

When living memories fade, historians seek out other fragmentary evidence of the past. Clues are squeezed from old photographs. Maps, deeds, military records, and other official documents assist in chronological accuracy. These are undisputed facts known as primary sources of information and are the essential foundation for any story.

But primary sources when used alone stand out like kindergarten stick-figures compared to an artist's landscape. Filling in the spaces between known times and places must rely on secondary sources of information such as old newspaper articles and other early books and periodicals. Admittedly, secondary sources sometimes are inaccurate tales of colorful 19th century writers who delighted in repeating or expanding concoctions of the "old-timers who relied on their imaginations for facts and their memories for things that never happened."

For example, critics of the use of secondary information cite a *Virginia Chronicle* story about the life of its editor, Jim Townsend, written by himself. He reviewed so many adventures and achievements that one reader observed; "Some of Mr. Townsend's friends who are of a mathematical turn of mind have ascertained from the dates of his biography furnished by him that this remarkable man is 384 years old."

Others maintain that a reasonable interpretation of secondary information adds a certain flavor to documented facts, provides readers with a blend of material that is intentionally light and prevents them from dozing off before completing the first chapter. The hidden value of secondary information, then, is that it converts a dull story into an interesting one, albeit sometimes a conjectural one. Ed Scott observed in his book, *San Diego County Soldiers-Pioneers* that "most old husbands' tales passed on by Smythe, Black, or in articles of the *Golden Era* are usually erroneous when checked against official records." However, the hard fact remains that these works are highly sought and frequently referenced histories of San Diego because of their entertaining blend of primary and secondary information.

A final thought: Most authors, unless they're dead, are less than enthusiastic about their previously published material being re-used even though it, too, likely was developed from someone else's earlier writings.

In simplest terms: using the work of a single author is plagarism, and that's forbidden; using the work of several authors is research, and that's brilliant. Our "research" includes information from the following sources:

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CREDITS

Included among our 184 chosen photographs are several, often-used "favorites" from the files of the San Diego Historical Society Photographic Division and Ed Fletcher's Photographic Collection. With them are many previously unpublished illustrations provided by the following friends who also assisted with their oral information. And apologies to many others inadvertently omitted from this list.

San Diego Historical Society, Photographic Division.
Allen, Norton and Ethel. Grossmont, California.
Clark, Evelyn. Grossmont, California.
Long, Nora. San Diego, California
Helix Irrigation District, La Mesa, California.
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La Mesa Historical Society, La Mesa, California.
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Higgins, Vivian. Spring Valley, California.
Roland, Mrs. Robert D. El Cajon, California.
Todd, Thelma. La Mesa, California.
El Cajon Historical Society.
Rumble, Henry and Ernestine. Ventura, CA.
Massie, Shirley. La Mesa, California.
Ed Fletcher Photo Collection, U.C.S.D. La Jolla.
Bibb, Lee. La Mesa, California.
Smith, Eileen and Ron. Spring Valley, CA.
Wilmurt, Zelda. Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
Fletcher, Ed Jr. El Cajon, California.
Sommerville, Estella. Santee, CA.

The many- times printed illustration of La Mesa's Fourth of July celebration in 1911 (above) is indicative of the happy mood most local residents were enjoying at that time. A beautiful residential subdivision on the adjacent mountain of Grossmont that everyone assumed was part of La Mesa, or soon would be, had undergone almost a decade of physical improvements and was ready for rapid development. Utilities and the telephone service would arrive within months, the first homes of an exclusive "Colony for Artists" would be completed the next year, and the official opening of the first road to its summit, barely two miles away, was scheduled for 1913. Events that happened before and after this gala event form the basis for our story about Grossmont.

EARLY EVENTS LEADING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF GROSSMONT AND MOUNT HELIX

One could expect a story about Grossmont and Mount Helix to begin when the first settlers arrived during the closing years of the last century. Before then, the twin peaks in east San Diego county stood as silent sentinels ignored by the newcomers who populated the valleys surrounding them.

Yet, the intriguing question persists regarding the first settlers. Who were they and where did they come from? What attracted them to the picturesque mountains which, until their arrival, were shown as "conspicuous blanks" on the charts of early Spanish land grants and later on maps of Mexican Ranchos. To answer these queries requires an expanded story, both from a chronological and geographical standpoint.

Greater detail given to indirectly associated events pertinent to the ultimate development of the mountains appeals to many readers while others prefer greater emphasis on activities during the contemporary period. Thus, in an effort to appease everyone, the following preface has been stretched out to cover events leading to development which can be ignored by readers whose interest is directed to the more recent happenings after the turn of the century.

The Beginning

As the earth shivered during an Ice Age 16,000 years ago, a continental glacier sucked up so much ocean water that the world's sea level dropped 300 feet causing small islands to emerge and exposing a wide land bridge connecting Asia with the North American Continent. Over this bridge came primitive people slowly pushing southward until they reached the southernmost tip of South America centuries later. Enroute, tiny factions split off forming the nucleus of America's prehistoric cultures. Small clusters of these people who remained in the local area became San Diego's first "settlers" and were the distant forefathers of today's native Indian population in San Diego county.

As eons passed into the fifteenth century, a.d., later generations of these early people continued to enjoy life in San Diego while, at the same time some 3,000 miles to the east, Europeans suddenly discovered a continent existed.

The First Explorers

In 1492, the Spanish King commissioned Christopher Columbus, an Italian navigator living in Portugal, to chart a sea route to the Orient. Despite warnings by astrologists that ships venturing too far out to sea likely would disappear over the edge of a flat world, he valiantly set sail and immediately lost his bearings, ending up on a Caribbean Island instead of China. It's reasonable to assume he wasn't anxious to return to Spain to be ostracized for his navigational blunder, but after a year had passed, he quietly returned home to assure His Highness that the men left behind were searching for — and surely would find— gold and treasures to satisfy the royal greed.

Hernando Cortez, a top officer of the Columbus contingent, was one of those left behind to endure a boring existence that became so unbearable by 1521 that he easily convinced a group of 380 volunteers to join him aboard a small leaky ship and sail westward into the great blue unknown. It must have seemed to be an eternity before the motley group bumped into the east coast of Mexico.

Cortez Versus Montezuma

Cortez and his intruders surely would have been killed by the soldiers of Emperor Montezuma had it not been for an Indian legend that predicted the arrival of a wavy-haired, light-skinned God — coincidentally, a deity with features closely resembling those of Cortez. This stroke of good fortune allowed Cortez to come ashore unharmed. When they reached the beach, the highly superstitious natives sighted the Spanish riders astride the dozen horses they had brought along and believing them to be monolithic miracles, fled in complete disarray. Thus began the conquest of the mighty legions of Montezuma's Empire by a mere 380 Spanish soldiers, a feat which must be ranked among the most inconceivable military exploits of all time.

Two factors contributed to this remarkable accomplishment: first, as noted, the deeply superstitious natives were easily confused by Cortez' well-planned antics, and secondly, the mental instability of Montezuma that confused his soldiers even further. Montezuma may have been insane, but when it became obvious to him that his glorious empire was about to crumble, he had enough common sense to order his slaves to gather as much gold and jewels as they could carry and head northward to some secure hiding place. Although Montezuma considered the Spanish godly and granted most of Cortez' wishes, he steadfastly refused to divulge the location of his hidden treasure. However, the mere knowledge of its existence was something of a positive nature that Cortez

realized would be of interest to his king. Indeed, when he submitted his exaggerated account of the cache — adding a few imaginative tales of "entire villages sparkling with gold and gems" — His Highness was intrigued and immediately despatched Juan Cabrillo back to the New World with instructions to return with his cargo-holds filled with the riches described by Cortez.

The Discovery of San Diego's Harbor

Predictably, Cabrillo failed to find any riches. But while he was searching, he discovered a beautiful harbor where he took on food and water and rested his men for a few days. By a long stretch of the imagination, on September 24, 1542, Cabrillo and his men technically became San Diego's first tourists.

The second wave of visitors to the local scene was led by Sebastian Vizcaino sixty years later. Like Cabrillo, he failed to locate the gold and jewels described by Cortez, but he made a minor historical niche for himself by changing most of the names on Cabrillo's local charts including the name of the harbor which he changed from San Miguel to San Diego.

Vizcaino's failure to locate Montezuma's treasure — or any treasure — convinced the disappointed Spanish King that future voyages to the New World weren't worth the risk and expense. Kings who followed agreed, and for the next 167 years San Diego remained dormant.

The next California visitors were the Russians who arrived in the early 1800s. As usual, the attraction was economic, but this time the sea otter, not gold, was the principal object. Otter furs were very fashionable and commanded high prices on the world markets. The presence of the Russian otter hunters in northern California displeased the Spanish royalty; they had no interest in developing their New World land, but certainly didn't want anyone else to have it, and thus an Expeditionary Force was despatched to New Spain immediately with orders to establish a base at Monterey. Whoever controlled Monterey, automatically controlled all of New Spain (California).

California's First Mission

The next visitors to San Diego were members of five contingents which departed separately from Mexico City, both by land and by sea heading for Monterey. Enroute, they regrouped in San Diego. Father Junipero Serra, commander of the religious faction, wanted to remain in San Diego for a few days to rest his men and allow his damaged leg to heal. But Gaspar Portola, head of the military faction, insisted on departing for

Monterey immediately. In a display of conflicting authority, Portola marched off in a fit of rage leaving the good padre and his followers stranded behind. Serra wasn't particularly thrilled to find himself in hostile Indian country without military protection, but even more aggravating was the fact that his importance had been successfully challenged.

Serra waited for two days after Portola had marched out of sight and then, disregarding his sore leg, dragged a makeshift cross to the top of Presidio Hill and declared it to be the site of the first Spanish mission in California. Portola thereby was denied the honor of founding the first California mission at Monterey. The inner-circle squabble faded away after Portola lost his way and never reached Monterey.

The founding of San Diego was described by Fr. Junipero Serra's diarist, Father Palou, who wrote: ". . . with but a handful of men, the sick and the strong being in a state of discomfort, the Father President found himself charged with the founding of a mission on that harbor. Therefore, moved by his apostolic zeal, he set his hand to the project. The beginning was made two days after the departure of the expedition (Portola's journey to Monterey), that is, on the 16th of July, 1769 . . . so he raised the standard of the Holy Cross, fixing it on the spot that seemed most suitable for building a town in the vicinity of the harbor. With the few men available, in the intervals when it was not necessary for them to be taking care of the sick, some humble huts or sheds were built, one of them destined to serve as the chapel . . . "

During the following years, the San Diego Mission padres developed a prosperous hide and tallow industry that attracted the attention of traders from Spain and other parts of the world. When the mission was unable to supply the increasing demand of the traders, the traders established their own cattle ranches and, thus, San Diego became a tiny cluster of people with an independent identity not totally dominated by the Mission's sphere of influence. A number of the mission's soldiers saw these ranches as a golden opportunity to break away from the garrison and establish their own independence. Most became successful ranchers and became the nucleus of many prominent San Diego families today.

In 1810, Mexico declared her independence from Spain and eleven years later Spain officially agreed to her demands. This significant achievement had little effect on daily life in San Diego since communication and transportation facilities were so primitive that months passed before anyone in town knew about the treaty. Three more years passed before the Mexican government replaced the Spanish soldiers at the Presidio. Finally, in 1834 when the Spanish missions were secularized, their padres expelled and their lands confiscated, San Diego changed from a Spanish religious colony to a Mexican pueblo. The resulting political, economic and social confusion under Mexican rule ended with the close of the Mexican-American War in 1847.

The political chaos existing under Mexican rule was mild compared with the confusion after the war. The inability to communicate with faraway Washington complicated every facet of life under American rule including the procedure of replacing ousted Mexican officials. The question of who should replace whom posed as many questions as there were candidates. Laws, if any, were fuzzy, generally ignored and impossible to enforce. The void in authority resulted in the formation of a new political force, the *Californians*, comprised of Americans and Mexicans-turned-Americans who hadn't fared well under previous Mexican rule and who couldn't foresee better conditions under long-distance control from Washington. Their "Bear Republic" lasted until 1850 when California became a state of the Union.

The American victory in the Mexican War was so overwhelming that the Hidalgo Treaty that followed was more of a symbolic gesture than a detailed, hammered-out agreement. Provisions were set forth in vague, general terms including specifications for a boundary line separating the two countries. An official boundary served no purpose other than being a political formality as both Mexicans and Americans could criss-cross the hypothetical line as they pleased. Two and a half years passed before Boundary Commissions of Mexico and the United States met in San Diego to establish an actual international border.

"New San Diego"

Often overlooked as one of the Border Commission's major accomplishments was the creation of "New San Diego." The first thought of moving San Diego from Old Town to a new site came in the late summer of 1850 when Chief Surveyor Andrew Gray and his assistant, Lieutenant Thomas D. Johns, began charting the area to determine the exact location of the starting point of the border described in the Hidalgo Treaty. Referring to a 1782 map drawn by Don Juan Pantoja, the men learned that the main Spanish anchorage in 1782 was not off La Playa (Point Loma) where most shipping was concentrated in 1850 but on the opposite side of the bay near the present intersection of Pacific Highway and Market Streets where "deep waters of the channel moved closest to the shore."

While the idea of New San Diego was still in the talking stage, Lieutenant Johns received orders from Washington to make preliminary preparations for the construction of an Army warehouse on La Playa. Johns, convinced New Town site was a superior location for the building, recommended the site be changed and the Army agreed. When Surveyor Gray was instructed to lay-out the prosposed depot on the new town site, the two men were provided the opportunity to simultaneously lay-out an entire new town, courtesy of the United States government. Thus when Gray completed his survey for the depot site, he also had in hand an official map of New San Diego indicating all city blocks and numbered lots.

Their next move was to acquire the land from Mayor Estudillo of Old Town. This was simplified when the mayor's son-in-law, wealthy William Heath Davis, became a partner with Gray and Davis and supplied the $2304 necessary to obtain a deed for the waterfront property. As the "Gray-Davis" town began to show signs of success, many local citizens who originally chose not to become involved, decided to do the next best thing: they bought 637 acres of land between New Town and Old Town they called Middletown. Before long it became clear that there weren't enough people in the entire area to fill all three communities, much less support them. Things began to sour. By 1853, most merchants of New Town returned to Old Town and the once-promising venture languished and died. Middletown was never able to get off the ground.

During the summer of 1861, California Volunteer regiments were bivouacked at New Town's empty Army Depot, the Pantoja Hotel, on Davis' Wharf, and in the skeletal remains of a dozen clapboard houses built ten years earlier. The winter of 1861-1862 was particularly wet and stormy with the cutting chill of the cold rain making life miserable. By December, the soldiers had run out of firewood and began collecting scraps of lumber from fallen picket fences and other rubble heaps, and

finally were forced to dismantle the last of the New Town structures that still remained standing.

Alonzo Horton

Almost a year after the departure of the last soldiers from New Town in 1867, a ship arrived from San Francisco and dropped anchor in the channel. Aboard its dinghy heading for the waterfront shoreline was a 57-year-old furniture merchant who had come south to the warm climate of San Diego with the hope of curing his consumption. His name: Amos Alonzo Horton. As he reached the shore, he noticed the desolation at the old New Town site located at the best landing point in the harbor. He wondered in disbelief why the local activity was centered in Old Town, some five miles distant from the harbor's superior berthing area. At that moment, Horton decided he would build a new town which would become a thriving commercial seaport in the future. The site of his new town, of course, was the exact same site of the original Gray-Davis New Town laid out seventeen years earlier.

Horton's eagerness was tempered by the fact his bank balance was only $300, hardly enough to build a new town. As he looked into the matter, he was told that the sneakiest and cheapest way to acquire the land was to convince the Old Town city council to sell it at auction. Following the demise of the Gray-Davis New Town "folly," there was no local interest in the property and the council agreed to schedule an auction for May 27, 1867, just twelve days after Horton had arrived on the local scene. Some observers believe the auctioneer was a bit hasty when he yelled "sold!" after Horton's first bid of $265 for the seven Pueblo lots. But nobody cared — San Diego's Pueblo lands totalled over 48,000 virgin acres "available to developers like a huge melon on a sunny field." Alonzo Horton received the juiciest slice from the heart of the melon by arriving in San Diego before the post Civil War land developers.

The Julian Gold Strike

When the interrupting confusion of the Civil War ended, an exciting parade of changes began in and around San Diego giving strong indications that the city would soon graduate from a sleepy trailside village into a full-fledged town of glittering importance comparable, perhaps, to San Francisco.

In 1869, completion of the first transcontinental railroad was indirectly significant to local development as travel to the West became more inviting to the timid. It provided an easier escape for unsavory individuals anxious to leave home for a variety of reasons and simplified the move for

eastern farmers seeking more moderate growing conditions. Displaced southerners, discharged military men and others whose lives had been disjointed by the war were intrigued by the appealing stories expounding the virtues of life in the West. Land sales promoters, called "boomers," appeared from nowhere and offered westbound train journeys called "tours" at no cost to those who bought land from them and remained in the west. From this beginning, the "tourist" industry became established as a cornerstone of the local economy.

High on the list of "tourist attractions" was the wonderful Southern California climate with its health-giving implications. This caught the attention of eastern doctors and the suggestion that the year 'round moderate climate provided some mysterious curative power gave them a legitimate reason to prescribe a one-way ticket to California for consumptives they were unable to cure. The sickly, in droves, headed for the western frontier and the healthy — who wanted to stay that way — followed them.

The boomers' promotional schemes along with word-of-mouth accolades from the first arrivals ignited a slow emigration to the west. Both were effective, but they were too gradual; some dynamic attraction was essential to speed up the settlement of sleepy San Diego. Unexpectedly, the needed impetus came in the Fall of 1869 with the discovery of gold in the Cuyamaca Mountains!

But all gold rushes aren't necessarily alike. The 1849 discovery at John Sutter's Mill resulted in an onslaught of humanity converging on the Sacramento gold fields while, in contrast, the 1869 discovery by ex-slave Fred Coleman in the Cuyamaca Mountains stalled before it could generate any sizeable momentum.

Several problems confronted the first miners. Unlike the '49ers when surface finds led to vast underground caches, Julian gold was locked into quartz ore that required costly time and effort to remove it. Inadequate funding was another impeding factor. Most prospective mine operators depended on the cooperation of San Francisco financiers who, in turn, sought advice from San Francisco engineering experts regarding the wisdom of investing in San Diego. The engineering reports clearly were influenced by a smoldering jealousy existing between the two cities, and thus over-emphasized potential trouble spots such as pinched-out veins and the possibility of deadly gases at lower depths. Predictably, in light of such unfavorable reports, capitalists were reluctant to provide funding for tools and machinery. Finally, transportation of equipment to the mines and gold ore from the mines was all but impossible until road improvements were made.

But the greatest concern of the miners was the possibility of losing their claims because of continuing legal confusion over the Mexican boundaries of their land that Pio Pico gave to Augustine Olivera in 1845. After California became a state in 1850, the U. S. Land Commissioner rejected Olivera's request for an American deed of ownership for his Cuyamaca Rancho because of hazy boundary descriptions. But a few months later, a U. S. District Court reversed the decision. When the government appealed the case, a disgusted Olivera decided to rid himself of the legal headache and sell the property.

Only a few months before Coleman's gold discovery in 1869, five local businessmen bought the Cuyamaca Rancho because it was rich in heavy timber stands which, they believed, could be used for their various construction jobs in San Diego. Coleman's subsequent discovery of gold changed the picture. The new owners who paid little attention to the boundaries of their unpopulated land at first, now decided it would be a delightful development if their timberland also included the goldfields and quickly used their combined clout to entice the government to drop the case and give them clear title. Assuming the miners' claims were inside the old rancho's borders, the new owners called a meeting on May 25, 1870, and declared all claims were null and void. They added, however, that there was no need for concern, no need to interrupt the miners' daily activities. The only difference was that henceforth they would be obliged to pay a small royalty on every ton they removed from the ground.

The Stonewall Mine was the most productive of all strikes in the Julian area, giving up more than $2,000,000 worth of gold before seepage from nearby Cuyamaca Lake caused the miners to spend more time bailing out water than digging ore which forced closure of the mine in 1893.

Photograph, above, of the Foster Stage in front of Verlaques Store in Ramona in 1891. During the closing years of the last century, horse and mule drawn wagons were the only means of supplying the Julian mining operations. "The prospectors needed equipment, food, and shelter, not to mention hay for their animals and whiskey to make their problems more bearable and their successes more remarkable."

When the miners realized that the "small royalty" they were asked to pay amounted to more than half their expected profit, they were adamant and began a legal battle that lasted the next three years. In November of 1873, the Surveyor General in Washington declared the mines were not within the Cuyamaca Rancho boundaries, but by then, it was too late for any real "rush" to occur.

Various reports estimated Julian's gold output between $5 million and $15 million at a time when the mere whisper of the word million raised eyebrows. Certainly the royalty fee caused much of the gold output to clandestinely disappear without recording. And had not the mines been plagued by accidents, snarled in legal entanglements, and unable to attract sufficient capital, even more gold would have been mined. Most old timers believe large quantities of gold still exist under the beautiful mountains and valleys of Julian, Banner, and Cuyamaca.

The Half-Way Houses

By 1872, three years after the original strike, mule-drawn freight wagons replaced the pack trains as an improved roadway was completed between Julian and San Diego. With the opening of the second road, then a third, the number of lumbering freighters increased and even a Concord stage completed a trial run. The most heavily traveled route passed through Ramona and Santa Ysabel and a second road wound through Alpine, Descanso, thence northeast to the Julian goldfields. All roads had one thing in common — they skirted the foothills of Grossmont enroute.

The journey between the harbor and the Julian mines required the best part of two days and required travelers to camp overnight along the way. Before long, a few enterprising individuals capitalized on the situation by building "half-way houses" catering to the tired freighters. The shaky, clapboard structures were built on sites near shallow well water, equipped with bunks and corrals, and stocked with food, liquor, and hay.

These way stations were the first permanent settlements near Grossmont and Mount Helix. Before then, according to Leola Leahy's *Memoirs*, there were no houses in La Mesa, and but a few in Spring Valley. Since El Cajon boasted of only 25 houses in 1869, the Knox Hotel may be considered the real beginning of El Cajon.

A Direct Line East

At the time California was admitted to the Union in 1850, some government officials already were discussing the feasibility of a "Pacific rail line, and since everyone has conceded that San Diego's harbor is equal or superior to any other along the coastline, its choice as a western terminal seems a certainty." This dream prompted William Davis and Andrew Gray to pursue their idea of a "New Town" with increased vigor. But when Congress failed to provide financing for the first proposed railroad, thirty-five years of frustration began for local railroad proponents. Optimism reached the highest levels, then hopes were dashed for one reason or another. Everyone was convinced that someday trains from the east would chug along the southern route, the 32nd parallel, and come to stop at San Diego bay . . . but when?

In 1867, Congress refused to subsidize John Fremont's plan for a southern rail line while, at the same time, it was financing both the eastern and western extensions of the first transcontinental railroad that would meet at Ogden Utah in 1869. Obviously one result of the Civil War was a shift of power in Congress in favor of northern interests.

The first train of the San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway to reach Lakeside in 1889.

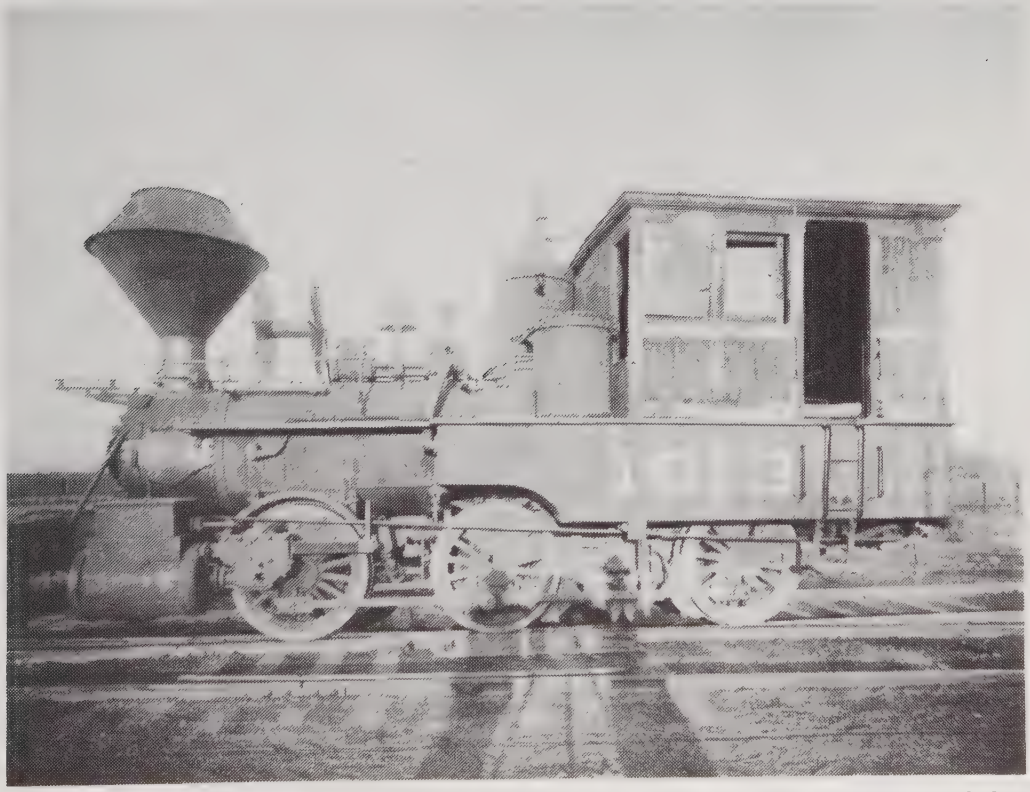
The intriguing subject of the Julian gold strike was a main subject of conversation among the 70,000 newcomers to San Francisco who arrived on the first transcontinental trains of 1869-1870. The resulting southward migration attracted the attention of eastern railroad tycoons including Colonel Tom Scott, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1871, he announced plans to build a privately-financed railroad along the 32nd parallel, ending at San Diego. Local enthusiasm soared, but began to fade as Scott procrastinated. By the time he was ready to proceed, the infamous "Black Friday" struck and precipitated the Panic of 1873. Tom Scott announced he would be forced to withdraw unless Congress could provide financing. But the day of grants had passed, and with a severe depression in force, congress could not be induced to provide a subsidy.

Constant pressure brought to bear by local supporters appeared to have succeeded in 1875 when congress changed its position and agreed to finance a new railroad along the 32nd parallel. Everyone assumed this was a reinstatement of the charter received by Tom Scott in 1872. Then it was noticed that a brief, seemingly insignificant amendment was tacked onto the bill stating the name of the railroad would be the Southern Pacific. Confusion reigned — Scott's railroad was to be named the Texas & Pacific. And there already existed a railroad named the Southern Pacific — a tiny feeder line between Gilroy and San Francisco owned by wealthy J. P. Huntington. Was this a typographical error or just an oversight?

It was neither. Rather, it was a clever coup by Huntington who easily convinced Washington officials that the risk of financial loss was far less by awarding him the charter to "extend his existing railroad" rather than guaranteeing the cost of a brand new railroad to financially-troubled Scott. What Huntington didn't mention was the extension for his railroad was a 2,000 mile addition to his existing 20-mile long Southern Pacific.

Frustration again prevailed. It seemed inconceivable that a railroad entering California along the 32nd parallel would swerve northward to end at San Francisco rather than end at a closer Southern California terminal. Huntington quickly saw an opportunity to dangle the juicy plum of a terminal in front of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego — the three cities desperately wanting it. But the railroad's exorbitant demands for cash and land caused San Diego and San Francisco to drop out of the bidding, allowing Los Angeles to receive the terminal site by default. Thus two transcontinental railroads reached the Pacific, one terminating at San Francisco and the other at Los Angeles.

As the 1870s drew to a close, most San Diegans resigned themselves to the fact that there never would be a direct rail connection from San Diego through the back country to the east. Only one man, Frank Kimball, founder of National City, refused to capitulate. When the Santa



Central Pacific Engine #1013. Built by Cooke in 1867. Note the shadows of the photographers in the foreground.

CALIFORNIA'S RAILROADS IN 1872

CAL. & O. R. R. — California & Oregon Railroad, from Sacramento to Portland.

CAL. P. R. R. or **C. P. R. R.** — California Pacific Railroad, from Calistoga to Vallejo to Sacramento to Ogden, Utah.

W. P. R. R. — Western Pacific Railroad, from Oakland to Stockton to Sacramento.

S. P. R. R. — Southern Pacific Railroad, from San Francisco to Gilroy to Hollister.

Freight train of the San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway pulling out of El Cajon Valley up the Grossmont Grade in 1895.

Fe Railroad announced it was planning "to strike the Pacific somewhere, being favorably disposed to Guymas in Mexico," he sprung into action offering land in National City for a terminal and additional acreage of right-of-way. When J. P. Huntington (a partner in the Santa Fe as well as the Southern Pacific) refused, he added a small bribe of $10,000 cash to sweeten the pot and an agreement was signed and sealed in October of 1880. Six months later the first rail was laid. At long last, railroad proponents appeared to have something to cheer about.

But again, the rejoicing was premature as the powerful Southern Pacific convinced the California Railroad Commission that the state was adequately served by one railroad, and there was no need to permit the Santa Fe to enter the state. To make matters worse, flooding during the winter of 1883-1884 washed away the Santa Fe's tracks north of Oceanside. With the Santa Fe reeling under adversity, the Southern Pacific decided the time was ripe for them to enter the muddied picture and extend their own lines to San Diego. Bitter fighting erupted between the two railroad giants with the Santa Fe merging as the victor because their National City terminal was already in place. Their washed-out tracks were abandoned and new ones were built swinging inland at San Juan Capistrano. At long last, in 1885, San Diego had a direct rail connection to the east (via Los Angeles) although it was not as direct a connection (via Yuma) as many would have preferred.

Thirty-five years of frustration were over!

The Local Railroads

During the two years following the completion of "San Diego's first rail connection to the east in 1885," the Santa Fe stockpiled huge inventories of materials for more buildings at their National City Terminal.

As noted, incoming trains brought more frenzied speculators, investors, and settlers than the city could accommodate and the overflow soon searched for land in the back country. Small clusters of people gathered on small plots of land and organized themselves into small communities with individual identities. These townships emphasized the need for a railroad connection between them and soon their collective voices were heard. Between 1885 and 1887 more than fifty spur lines representing several new railroad enterprises carried passengers on as many as 140 trains a day from National City to outlying areas.

But the happy days of the boom ended in 1888 and the Santa Fe found itself verging on bankruptcy as the construction of new lines from National City to Needles and to Los Angeles overextended its credit limits. In a last ditch effort to cut expenses, the National City terminal was closed down and all remaining materials were moved to San Bernardino.

In 1909, John D. Spreckels assumed control of the San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railroad, renamed it the San Diego & Cuymaca Railway Company, and added several new stations including the Grossmont Station shown above. That year, the published schedule read "to Lemon Grove, 28 minutes; to La Mesa, 37 minutes; to Grossmont, 45 minutes . . . "

The Tenth Street Depot was the starting point for the innovative gasoline driven coach known as the *Johnson Gas Car* or the *McKeen Motor Car*. In 1907 it required one hour and thirteen minutes to reach Foster, the most distant eastern point of the *San Diego, Cuymaca & Eastern Railway System*. The cars were short-lived and soon replaced by more economical steam locomotion.

At the last moment, the failure of the railroad was averted when John D. Spreckels sailed his yacht, the *Luriline*, into San Diego harbor and offered to make coal reserves he owned available on a long-term credit basis in exchange for controlling interest in the Santa Fe's local activities.

When the Santa Fe's plan for a direct line from National City to Needles to the east fizzled out, the three men instrumental in bringing the railroad to San Diego in the first place decided to build their own railroad through the back country. They named it the *San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railroad*. These men were Robert Allison, Frank Kimball, and Robert Waterman.

Building began in 1888, just as the boom deflated into a chaotic and foreboding bust. By the end of the next year, funds from the original subscription were exhausted as track laying reached Lakeside. Speculators and investors had vanished from the scene because they had nothing to invest. In 1891, all major construction came to a halt.

By then, the dream of a rail connection to the east via Cuyamaca was long forgotten.

The San Diego Flume

When San Diego's population swelled to 5,000 people by 1870, it became obvious that some system to supply adequate water was increasingly important. Only the more affluent landowners enjoyed windmills to pump water from wells; everyone else seemed content to buy their water from wagons at "two-bits a pail."

When Theodore S. Van Dyke, artist, author, and highly regarded engineer, came to San Diego in 1875, he was shocked by the complacent attitude toward local water development and decided to challenge the problem. Later, in his book, he noted "among those who built up San Diego to 20,000 people during the 1880s, scarcely one in a hundred knew or cared if there was a foot of arable water within a hundred miles. Many came for the climate, which was worth coming for, but the great majority came only on account of San Diego Bay which, they were sure, would someday make a great commercial city."

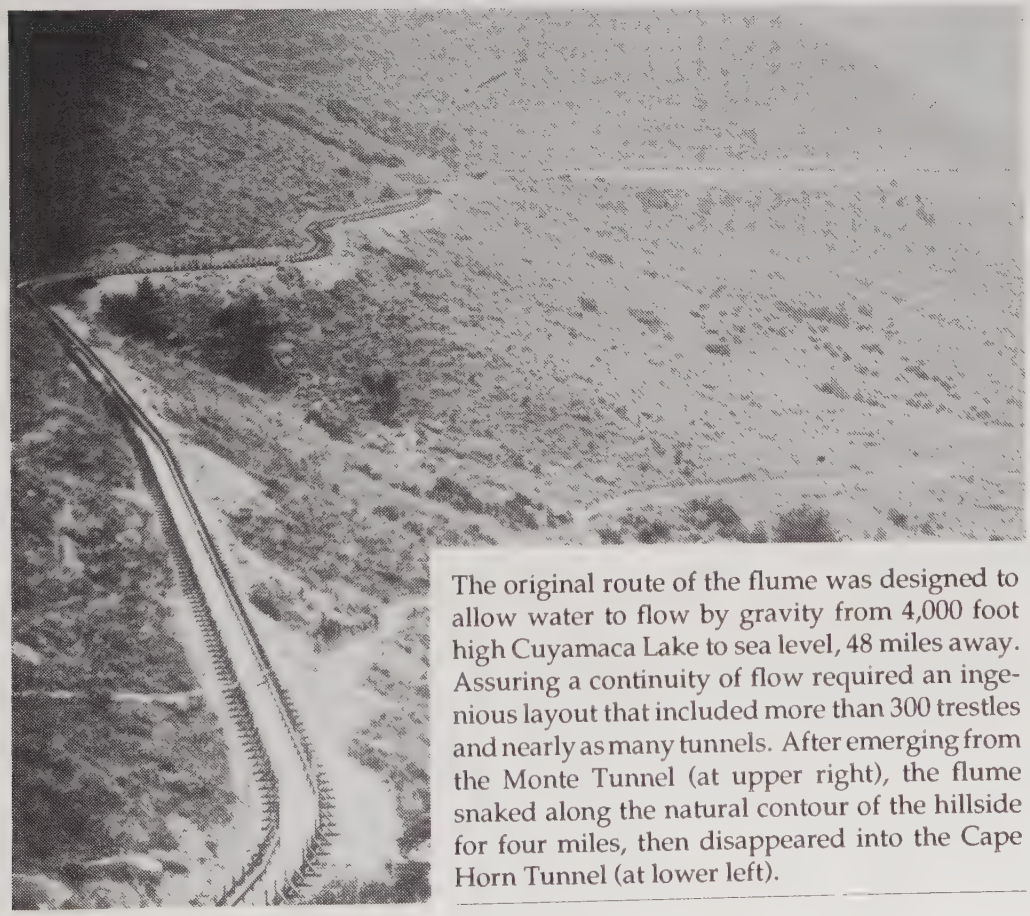
During the next ten years, Van Dyke plotted every lake and stream in the back country that could serve as a reservoir or a feeder to a main stream of water flowing to the coastal region by gravity. His plan was simple — dam Cuyamaca Lake, then funnel its waters along the natural course of the San Diego River, gaining additional water enroute by building more diverting and retaining dams on adjoining streams and tributaries. The instrument to provide an unrestricted flow was a "wooden ditch" or redwood flume designed to follow the contour of the land, leveling out the high spots with tunnels and the low spots with trestles.

Maintaining a constantly decreasing elevation required 315 canyons to be spanned by trestles and as many mountains to be penetrated by tunnels. The longest trestle was the Los Coches, stretching 1,774 feet; the longest tunnel was the Lankershim, measuring almost 1,900 feet.

Van Dyke's plan attracted the attention of several far-sighted businessmen who realized an adequate water supply was essential for San Diego to keep pace with the growth of other California cities. Financing fell into place quite readily and construction began in 1885. Only a little more than three years passed before the first water arrived at the Grossmont terminal (from which it was sent to San Diego by pipelines). The date was February 22, 1889, Washington's birthday.

From that day on, the quality of life changed in the city as well as in all the little communities located near the flume. "Grape, grain, and citrus crops flourished in El Cajon Valley, and Saturday night baths became a rule rather than an exception. *Eau de Cologne* switched from a body odor mask to its original purpose as a perfume."

Because people expected highly-publicized "crystal-clear water" to emerge at the terminating points, it was essential to remove larger

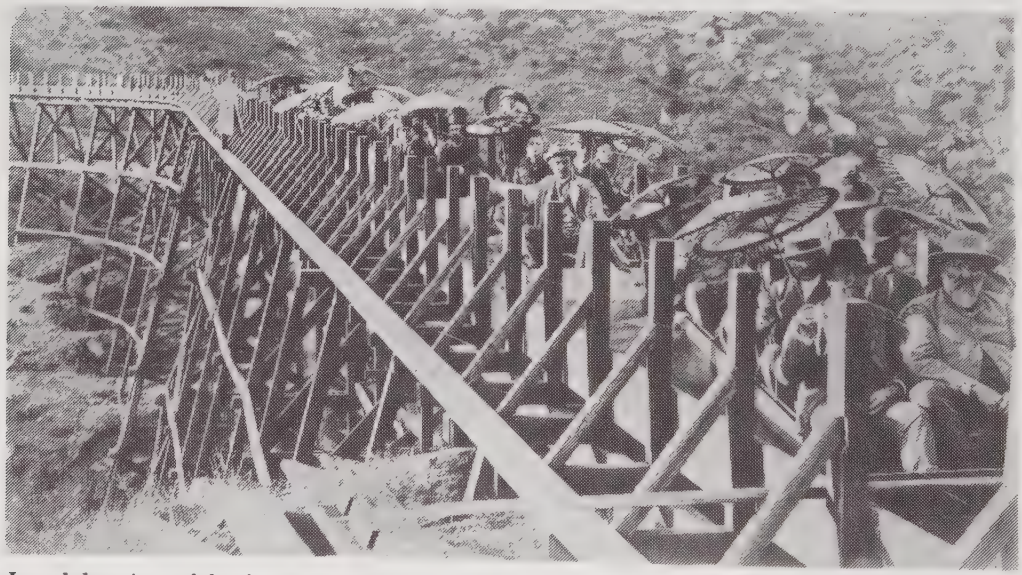


The original route of the flume was designed to allow water to flow by gravity from 4,000 foot high Cuyamaca Lake to sea level, 48 miles away. Assuring a continuity of flow required an ingenious layout that included more than 300 trestles and nearly as many tunnels. After emerging from the Monte Tunnel (at upper right), the flume snaked along the natural contour of the hillside for four miles, then disappeared into the Cape Horn Tunnel (at lower left).

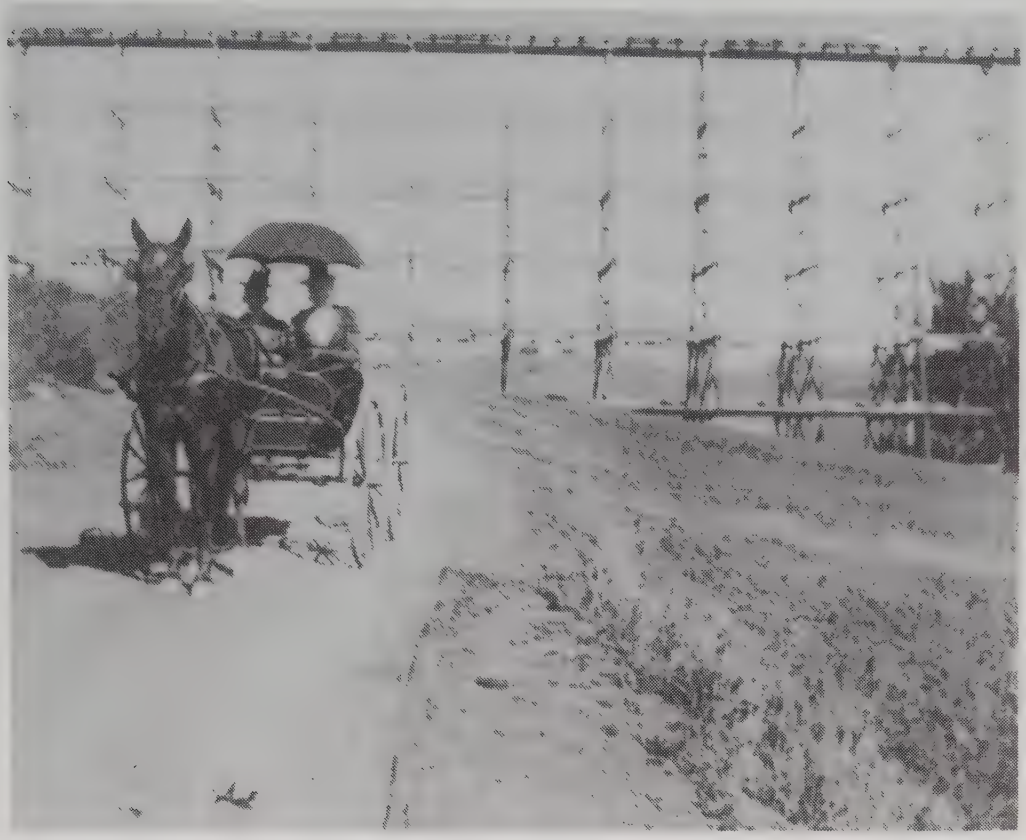
chunks of debris that fell into the flume water enroute. At first, Indians were hired as "flume walkers" to toss aside drowned skunks, squirrels, and other contaminating things. Some sections of the flume were built with ledges on which they walked while, in other sections, the Indians simply sloshed about, knee-deep in the water. But people were so ecstatic over receiving what they perceived as fresh drinking water that they ignored the fact that people had washed their feet in it. Unfortunately, this system proved unsatisfactory as brush, bugs, and dead rodents fell into the flume faster than the flume-walkers could remove them. A less primitive and more sanitary method was devised by building little flat-bottom boats that fit inside the six-foot width of the flume and slid down with the current carrying men with big nets.

Sliding down the flume in the small boats became such a popular fad that soon several boats were connected together to form "trains" and rented out for excursions. Historian Herbert Lockwood in his book, *Fallout from a Skeleton's Closet* noted that hardened miners from Julian regarded the ride down the swift current as a thrilling climax to an evening's consumption of red-eye whiskey. "Almost nightly, ranchers along the route were awakened by a boisterous rendition of *Sweet Adeline,* accompanied by the smashing of empty whiskey bottles against the boulders along the way."

Ownership of the flume changed hands several times before 1910 when Ed Fletcher and James Murray assumed control. By then the " boom of 1906" saw the emergence of many new back-country townships and

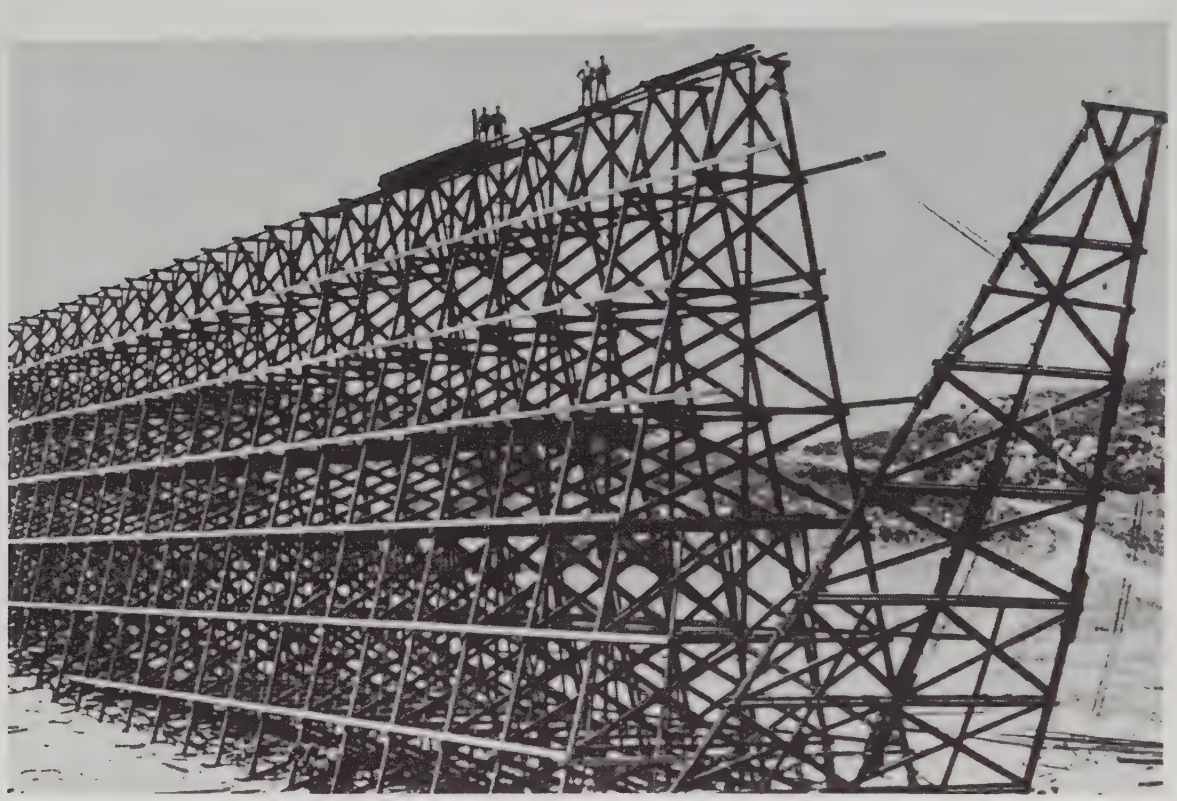


In celebration of the first water to arrive at Grossmont in 1889, Governor Waterman (far right) and San Diego's mayor D.C. Reed (alongside) took their places of honor leading a "train" of flat bottomed boats down the 37-mile trip from Cuyamaca Lake. Man wearing the straw hat, W.E.Robinson, originated the idea of the flume with Van Dyke.



Constant leakage from the trestles caused little "lakes" to form beneath them, providing swimming holes for youngsters living nearby (see far right). Occupants of the buggy are Louie Rogers and Dora Bishop.

Ten-mile check points along the flume assured a continuous water flow by removing any large chunks of debris or dead animals.



Modern safety restrictions would not permit workers to proudly pose atop a 6-story high trestle. The lack of such restrictions allowed construction of the flume to be completed in less than three years. Paradoxically, fewer casualties were experienced during the building of the flume than were experienced during the building of the San Francisco Bay bridge.

Heavy winds often caused catastropic damage to unfinished structures such as the Sweetwater Trestle, above.

developments such as Grossmont, each demanding more and more water. At the same time, land owners who originally gave easements for the flume to cross their property in exchange for perpetual free water, were demanding more water to supply their many new agricultural developments alongside the route of the flume.

This greatly increased demand forced Fletcher and Murray to apply for a status as a public utility that would allow them to cancel the original easement agreements. But before the railroad commission would approve their application, it demanded the problem of leakage — which reached as high as 25% to 30% in some sections — be corrected. Approval would be forthcoming only after the 37 mile length of the 2" by 12" plank flooring of the flume was lined with concrete which it claimed, was the best method to make it watertight.

Obviously, this was financially prohibitive and structurally impossible. The trestles were barely able to support the weight of the gushing water, much less an added concrete liner.

At the midnight hour, Fletcher and Murray conceived an alternate plan — they asked the commission to approve the use of a brand new rubberized roofing material to seal the flume, thus reducing the added weight significantly and reducing the cost from $1 million to $40,000. It was approved. Locating someone to tackle the job was another matter, but luckily after a concentrated search, a young upcoming contractor was located. His name: Roscoe Hazard.

The waterproofing experiment proved fairly successful for the next ten years, but the handwriting was on the wall. Meanwhile, steps were taken to remove trestles on the verge of tumbling down and replacing them with pipelines, or "syphons," which could be buried underground.

Although most of the trestles were abandoned and torn down between 1926 and 1934, the six-foot square concrete-braced tunnels continued in use for another ten years when they, too, were replaced by pipelines. For many years, exploring the old flume tunnels was the highlight of many picnics, but ultimately the dangers they posed for children and hikers prompted officials to destroy them. In 1967, Navy demolition teams were called in to blow up the few that remained.

And the final chapter of the Flume story was closed.

The Boom of the 1880s

During the mid 1880s, the nation was riding the crest of prosperity and everything pointed to an even greater boom for San Diego. There was no good reason for people not to come to San Diego, and many good reasons for them to come. More frequent steamship schedules and the new railroad connection to the east made it easier for everyone to travel to the local area.

Some of the attractions included descriptions of the West as an "earthly paradise" by periodicals and newspapers nationwide. The sickly learned of a cure-all climate or at least a comfortable place to spend one's final days. Everyone was exposed to the promotional plaudits about extensive areas of rich soil which, along with the temperate weather, all but guaranteed the successful cultivation of a large variety of crops with assured high yields. Huge tracts of empty land were available for growing grain and feed for an unlimited number of cattle, sheep, horses, and other livestock.

When the crops were harvested and the animals grown, the finest harbor on the Pacific Coast was at hand to facilitate shipment to faraway places. And freight cars of the Santa Fe were available for shipments to closer destinations.

Adequate water, the stumbling block for many blossoming pioneer communities posed no problem as the San Diego Flume construction was well underway. Its completion would have a tremendous impact on local agricultural development.

As the mid 1880s merged into the "Boom" years of 1886-1887, the number of people who would be attracted to San Diego no longer was a cautious forecast, it was an extravagant assumption as illustrated by an advertisement in the San Diego Union:

One Might Say
SAN DIEGO'S POPULATION IS 150,000!
. . . Although They All Aren't Here Yet!

As the local population swelled by 2,000 people each month, property values, real estate sales, new construction, and accompanying bedlam gathered momentum almost daily. As steamers and trains brought in more and more speculators, the same city lots were sold and resold until their asking price went beyond the scope of moderate resources to finance. Real estate investors became get-rich-quick speculators as property could be purchased one day and resold the next, or even

a couple of hours later for double the original cost or more. Van Dyke wrote that ". . . it was impossible to keep track of progress. Wildest dreams weren't wild enough!"

Back Country Additions

By 1887, things had become so hectic in town that ". . . a person could go into a hotel lobby and hardly find anyone he knew." During the previous eighteen months, the population had increased by 700% causing land promoters to look elsewhere for land to fill the unsatiable demand for it. Soon, "this and that man's additions to San Diego checkered the mesas and valleys for twenty miles about the town."

Some back country additions were legitimate attempts at new developments with graded roads and tree plantings. Others were strictly fraudulent schemes "sustained by promises to build hotels, sanitariums, opera houses, and motor lines by a specific date." Numerous new townsites were nearly inaccessible; one was at the bottom of a river; two extended into the bay. Few people actually visited these additions to see what they had been asked to invest in, but under the stimulus of band music and a free lunch, they bought from the auctioneer's map with a large payment down. "In this way, at least a quarter of a million dollars was thrown away upon alkali wastes, cobblestone tracts, and land overflowed with water."

Free barbeque lunches highlighted the activities at the site of land auctions.

The unique performances of the "boomers" as auctioneers of land parcels outside of town included elaborate advertising copy, fluent oratory, brass bands, free lunches and circus tactics. 1887 photograph of a land auction at Morena.

There were schemes for those speculators who insisted on seeing what they were buying. One of the more ingenious ideas was to impale imported oranges from Los Angeles on cactus spines or sagebrush branches allowing the prospective buyers, as they arrived, to gain a fleeting glimpse of the "fruit-bearing vegetation." The fruit then was hastily removed before a closer examination would expose the fraud.

But there were many promoters who honestly envisioned the land they were selling as potentially productive, particularly the land east of San Diego which was the logical area of future expansion. The most prominent among this group was Tom Fitch, the "dean of the boomers." Because of his continuing barrage of flowery speeches and newspaper advertisements extolling the beauty and benefits of the back country, he became known as "the silver- tongued orator."

Promoters in other California cities were not enjoying the success of Tom Fitch and launched smear campaigns against him in their home-town papers. They claimed his speeches and articles were pure hogwash and that his coveted back country of San Diego was a figment of his imagination. They flared out that "San Diego has no back country!" Tom Fitch responded by running the following colorful advertisment in the *Golden Era,* one of fifteen new periodicals that emerged during the boom:

"NO BACK COUNTRY AT SAN DIEGO!"

sneers Los Angeles, squatting among her sloughs, and fearful that the scepter of empire may be speedily snached from her fever-flushed hands.

"NO BACK COUNTRY AT SAN DIEGO!"

shouts San Francisco, gathering tolls upon highways she never built, watching with anxious eyes her dwindling commerce, and justly apprehensive that the Hawaiian and Australian, and possibly the China steamers, may seek nearer and cheaper and safer accommodations in the silver-gated Bay of San Diego.

"NO BACK COUNTRY AT SAN DIEGO!"

squeak the little towns that fancy there will be no feast for them, except in the crumbs that fall from Los Angeles' table-cloths.

"NO BACK COUNTRY AT SAN DIEGO!"

cries the Eastern speculator, who might have bought land in our valleys a few years since at $5 an acre, and city lots at $10 per front foot; and who lacked the cash or courage to invest then, now looks about him and find that, while he slept, the wand of progress increased values by tens; and so, in the hope of discouraging the faint hearted and keeping down prices until he can load up with cheap land, he likewise toots his little toot that "there is no back country to San Diego!"

LIARS AND SLAVES! LISTEN TO THE TRUTH!

Los Angeles is a part of *our* back country! Flea-infested in the summer, mired in winter, roasted at noon day, chilled at night, un-sewered, typhoid afflicted, pneumoniated Los Angeles. Smile not, oh five dollar excursionsts, but listen to the truth: Just as soon as either of these roads shall be completed, Los Angeles will be within three or four hours of San Diego. Railroad men will tell you . . . if they tell you the truth, which they occasionally do . . . that there can be no safer or better business than to carry freight to Los Angeles at a dollar and half a ton, or less than the cost of lighterage from the steamer to the wharf at Wilmington. And as for the new goose-necked harbor at Ballona, why if that winter resort for young ducks shall ever become an actuality as a harbor, it will never be for vessels drawing over ten feet of water. Los Angeles city and county is part of the back country of San Diego; so is Ventura, San Bernadino. And when we come nearer to home there is the fat and fertile valley of Tia Jauna, there is the broad and rich El Cajon, there are fertile Escondido and Poway, San Bernadino and Santa Margarita, and a dozen other valleys whose only outlet is San Diego . . . valleys whose combined area of arable acres is greater than that of the state of Connecticut, valleys whose agricultural products will, when settled, be counted annually by the millions. And further back on the hills beyond Lake Cuyamaca, hills covered with forests of oak and madrone and sugar pine, and draped with tangled vines and blossoming chaparral . . . hills from the summit of which you see on a clear night the Colorado glinting like a silver thread in the East, and the electric lights of San Diego sparkling like stars in the West back on these hills may be found in an area of a hundred miles in length and thirty miles more in width, hundreds of ledges of gold bearing quartz. San Diego county shipped over a millon dollars in gold bars last year, the product of two or three mines, and this part of the "back country" is to quintuple in yield next year.

Group of disappointed speculators leaving town, sporting a sign reading: "Pennsylvanians Going East and Don't you Foregt it. 12-2-88," A second sign simply says, "Busted."

The sudden appearance of thirty-two "For Sale" signs on the land at 4th and Elm Streets Illustrates the panic existing during the Crash of '88.

"In God We Trusted, In San Diego We Went Busted!"

An ominous omen hovered over the happy-go-lucky New Year's Eve celebrants welcoming the New Year of 1888. Exuberant speculators continued to bubble with enthusiasm over their land investments.

But local bankers didn't share their enthusiasm as they witnessed the dramatic pyramiding of property values shrink their cash reserves to a dangerously low level. Real estate was sold and resold on small margins at progressively higher prices resulting in increasingly fat loans secured by the very same property that, only a few weeks or months before, had sold for only a fraction of the amount of the new loan. The amount of the land securing their loans was the same, but the amount of money loaned against it had doubled, tripled, or even more. As the supply of dollars dwindled, the banks necessarily proceeded with more stringent fiscal policies.

Demands by the banks for higher margins made speculators uneasy. Ready financing for inflated prices no longer was a foregone conclusion. The long lines of buyers clamoring for any available property vanished when the banks insisted on larger chunks of cash for down payment. As buyers became more cautious, few speculators who were saddled with large mortgages first offered their land for sale at a small discount, then accepted any price when the first offers went begging.

Panic spread causing land values to tumble as quickly as they had risen during the two previous years. Many people correctly assumed the banks were teetering on the brink of disaster and, in an effort to salvage something, withdrew their cash. Ten thousand depositors withdrew more than $2,000,000 during a two week period and left town. This compounded the problem of the troubled banks which, at that point, were unable to finance any real estate transactions or new construction.

Following the glorious boom and resounding bust, a new day dawned and the local citizenry awoke with a dismal fiscal hangover. Like a rubber band, the boom had stretched all facets of the economy far ahead of a normal growth pattern before it snapped. Thus, an empty period followed when real estate activity, new construction, population growth, and business in general came to a standstill until the passage of time caught up with the premature accomplishments which had been squeezed into the brief period of the boom.

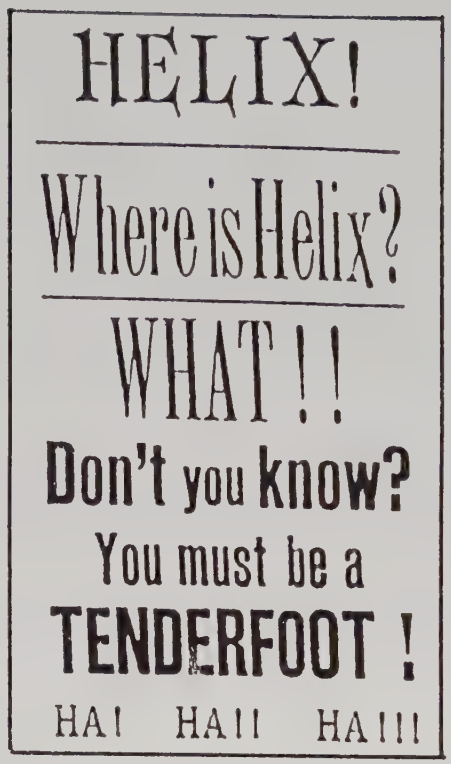
Finally, after twenty years of stagnation, San Diego found itself in the same position it would have been under conditions of steady growth uninterrupted by the boom. The normal way of life resumed.

Helix - "The Little Town That Wasn't"

As noted, the boom of the 1880s resulted in many "townships" being created in the back country which could be subdivided to satisfy the frenzied buyers. Some were simply fraudulent schemes, but others were quite legitimate. The little township of Helix didn't fall into either category. It was a joint effort by neighboring ranchers in peaceful Spring Valley that began to develop in the 1870s.

On July 31, 1865, Captain Rufus Porter and his family moved to the "unpeopled" area the Spanish had named after Saint George — *El Aguaje de San Jorge* — meaning in English, "George's Water Hole." The family's first act was to change the name George's Water Hole to a more harmonious Spring Valley. Four years later, as a member of the Army Corps of Engineers, Captain Porter was ordered to participate in the charting of the Southwest. Among his early accomplishments was selecting a cone-shaped mountain at the north end of Spring Valley as a landmark for map-makers. As the story goes, he named it "Helix" because a scientist

The tiny Helix Post Office, built by Hubert Howe Bancroft after he was chosen Postmaster in 1885, was located at the present intersection of Campo Road and Conrad Drive in Spring Valley. The mountain in the background was named Helix by Captain Rufus Porter after the Civil War when the Army Corps of Engineers was surveying the Southwest.



An advertisement appearing in the Spring Valley Herald in September, 1887, issue #1. Among other interesting notes in the paper was a plea to "please subscribe at once to the Herald and keep us out of the poor house. $1 a year."

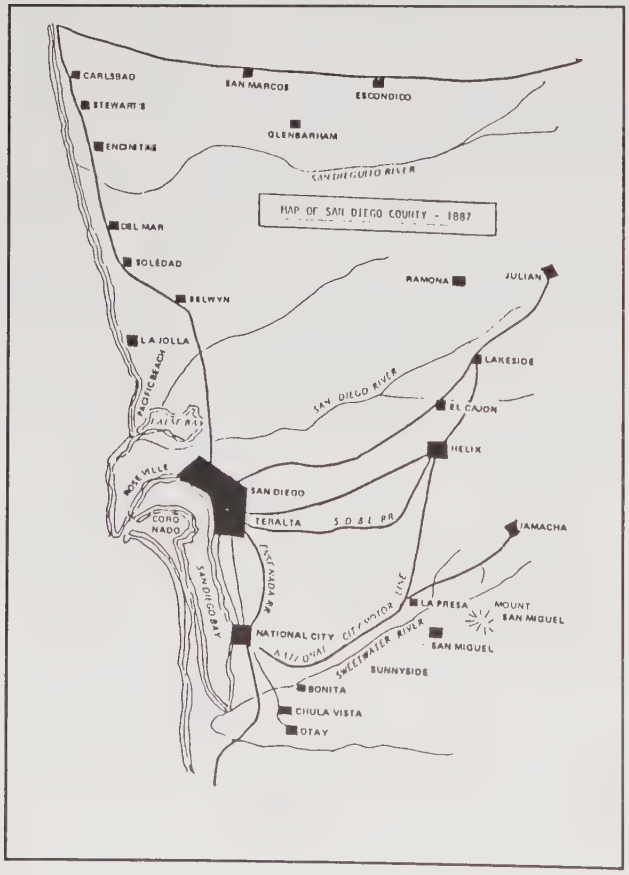
from the survey ship, *Hassler*, discovered a rare snail, the Helix Aspersa, on the mountainside. The township of Helix was started at this location nineteen years later.

In 1885, world-renown historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft came to Spring Valley and visited the Porters. After a few days, he abruptly offered to buy their ranch and the Porters agreed to sell. Bancroft also bought the adjoining ranches of Smith Campbell, the Crosbys, the Burdecks — a total of 700 acres he called Helix Farms. He appointed himself as the new postmaster and suggested to the U. S. Postal Service that the name of the Spring Valley Post Office be changed to the "Helix Post Office" in recognition of his developing ranch operation and the possibility of a new townsite being built in the near future. Approval was swift and automatic.

By 1887, the local citizens were bragging about their new town of Helix and pointing out the various advantages to investing in local property. "There are thousands looking for a suitable place for investment, a place where $100 will bring $300 to $500. Such a place is the town of Helix. Business lots now selling at $100 each will be worth $1000 in a year . . ."

The next year, the bankers realized they had overstepped their bounds. Little townships were the first effected by the tightening of credit. Helix, at the point of becoming a stable community with all the essentials

The innaugural run of the San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway stopped at the location of the Helix township. Engine #1 was named the "Governor Waterman" in recognition of his being one of the railroad's original organizers.



Tracks of the railroad were laid from San Diego to Helix, passing El Cajon and on to Lakeside. Plans to continue to Santa Ysabel then northward to connect with the eastbound Santa Fe at Needles failed to materialize because of lack of funds.

(Right) - One creative effort remaining from the H.H. Bancroft years was the cobblestone olla-shaped water reservoir built on the hillside above the Bancroft House by Chris and John Hinck. An early resident, Mrs. Reynolds, is shown checking the water level.

(Above) - After 1900, the increased demand for oil for automobiles and heating systems prompted landowners to sink wells in the hope of duplicating the successes of Los Angeles drillers. Efforts of Griffin Bancroft failed when his workers hit sand and water at 200 feet causing a geyser that irrigated the neighborhood vegetation for weeks.

necessary for a bright future, unfortunately was unable to withstand the general economic crisis that struck the entire area. The planned railroad line through Helix was completed only as far as La Presa three miles to the south in order to bring materials and labor to the Sweetwater Dam construction site. But when the dam was completed in 1888, there was no money left to continue the tracks and the rail ties were sold to local farmers for use as fence posts.

Plans for an elaborate sanitarium also were scuttled due to lack of financing. All other construction came to a halt as activity in and around Helix was confined to Hubert Bancroft's Helix Farms. Once on the verge of becoming a prosperous city, Helix became known as the "little town that wasn't."

The Revival of Agriculture

Before the completion of the Flume in 1889, the large numbers of eastern and midwestern farmers arriving in San Diego's back country were confronted with conditions that differed from those they were accustomed to at home. The topography was different, the seasonal climate was different, and without an adequate supply of water, the new farmers embarked on an "experimental farming" program without irrigation, relying only on natural sources of moisture.

The results were surprisingly successful and soon people were predicting that "dry farming" products would propel San Diego into "one of the wealthiest sections in the United States." But after four or five years passed, someone noticed that the dry farming experiments with young trees were not successful with mature trees that needed additional irrigation to sustain their larger yields and continued growth.

Finally, the ranchers conceded the dry-farming concept was ineffective for their larger groves, but before they abandoned their ranches and departed, a happy coincidence occurred — construction of the San Diego Flume began. An ample supply of irrigation water would salvage the thirsty groves. Experimental farming changed to large, permanent operations and the local agricultural industry began a rapid and continued growth simplified by new and improved distribution facilities to all sections of the country. National recognition of local production was just around the corner; all signs pointed to a brilliant future.

Mission Olives, Grapes, and Other Products

With the closure of the missions in 1834, their well-groomed vineyards, olive orchards and other products were left unattended and

allowed to deteriorate by the Mexicans who took over their land and transformed it into pastures for their horses and cattle. The Americans who followed the Mexicans spent some time searching for gold and becoming involved in the Civil War, and made no attempts to rejuvenate the old mission orchards and vineyards.

After the boom of the 1880s and completion of the flume, passive interest changed to genuine enthusiasm over the potential of back country agriculture. Attention suddenly was given to the dormant mission crops and they responded surprisingly well to a little tender, loving care — and an ample supply of water.

The new grape vineyardist learned that allowing a certain variety of grapes to shrivel up in the sun would produce a popular dried fruit called "raisins." By the turn of this century, the demand for grapes and raisins propelled the industry into the top position of California's economy. Hypothetically, had all the California grape vineyards been consolidated, they would have formed a continuous vineyard 750 miles long and 50 miles wide . . .

Junipero Serra's Olives and "Non-Clerical" Olives

The first olive crops of the Spanish Mission matured in 1794, almost twenty-five years after the padres arrived, and during the next forty years production was of such superior quality that the olive oil industry became

The Johnson Ranch (El Cajon Vineyard Company) was subdivided in 1894 to form the basis for the present city of El Cajon. Dr. Johnson was awarded one of the valley's first three telephones because of the importance of his extensive grape vineyards and raisin operation rather than the importance of his medical practice which could be handled by the barber or the undertaker.

Dr. C.M. Johnson and helper are shown in this 1893 photograph working with the drying trays used to produce raisins from grapes. Dr. Johnson purchased a huge section of El Cajon Valley during the height of the 1880s land boom, subdivided the area in 1889, and incorporated a large part into the El Cajon Vineyard Company in 1894.

the mainstay of the Mission's early survival. Then, as noted, the closing of the missions left the groves unattended . . .

Because of their ability to withstand long periods of neglect, many of the olive trees survived, depending only on occasional rain and morning mists. Thus, in 1869 when Flora and Frank Kimball were attracted to the old mission trees, enough life remained in them to allow the Kimballs to nurse many of them back to health. Soon the revived trees were vigorous enough to supply cuttings and produce a new crop of "clerical olives." Within a few years after these first cuttings had been planted and grown into mature trees, cuttings were taken from them and shipped to all parts of the state. Frank Kimball's business in the second generation cuttings prospered and his reputation as the "Father of the Non-Clerical Olives "grew by leaps and bounds.

The Honey Phenomena

By 1869, only one properly organized bee operation existed in San Diego county. The owner, R.R. Pardee, was not enthused about bees and offered to sell his business to a newcomer to the area, R.G. Clark. Clark sought out "the best bee man in California," John Harbinson, and together they decided to buy Pardee's bee business. On November 29, 1869,

During the late 1880s and 1890s, Hubert Howe Bancroft planted 220 acres of olive trees on his 700-acre ranch he named the Helix Farms Spring Valley Plantation. He also started experimental plantings of guavas, palms, citrus, almonds, raspberries, blackberries, currants, and other shrubs and trees. Helix Farms was located at the site of the proposed little town of Helix and became one of the largest olive producing farms in California.

Harbison arrived from Sacramento bringing 110 colonies of bees to add to the existing colonies they had purchased from Pardee. Thus began San Diego's grand honey industry.

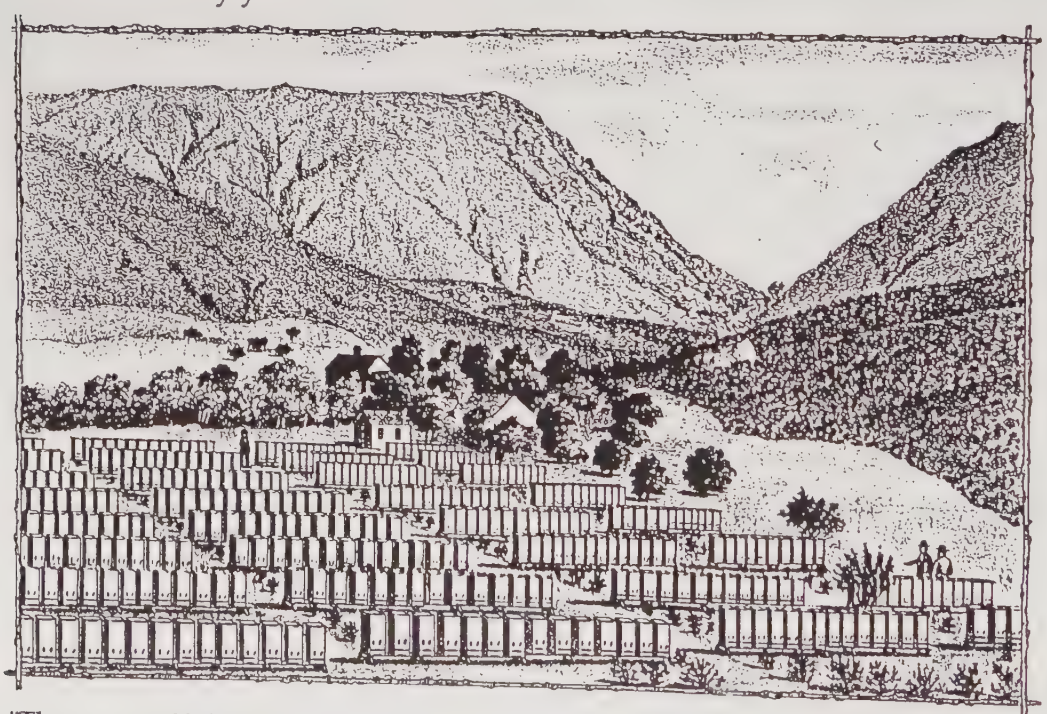
The partnership of Harbison and Clark lasted for five years during which time they sold many bees to new homesteaders and generously gave them advice. They showed them how they could "depend on bees to make honey for cash while figuring out what other crops could be grown." The result of their efforts was astounding; by the mid to late 1870s when most local endeavors were still in the experimental stage, honey became San Diego's leading industry! In 1878, according to the Chamber of Commerce Report quoted in the *San Diego Union*, "the county produced 2,075,000 pounds of honey. The second crop was wool, 1,050,000 pounds produced annually. "

By then, San Diego county's honey was recognized throughout the world thanks to high awards received at expositions as far away as Europe and the Orient. Orders were recieved from England, Japan, and many other foriegn countries. In one memorable occasion, the entire cargo of a trans-oceanic steamer bound for Germany was comprised of San Diego county honey.

After the partnership of Clark and Harbison was dissolved in 1874, Harbison moved his family to San Diego and established a main apiary along the Sweetwater River Canyon while Clark turned his attention to growing grapes.

The *San Diego Union* noted that the "economic impact of Harbison and his bees on the county was enormous. In addition to opening up what had been only grazing land for agriculture, bees and honey became the leading industry."

The bee business was progressing so well during the 1880s that some interrupting influence seemed destined to spoil the happy scenario. It came in the form of a county oridinance forbidding the raising of bees south of the San Diego River, a law demanded by the orchardists who believed the "bugs" damaged their crops. Landowners led by Levi Chase filed lawsuits against any tenant farmers who kept hives demanding they cease bee-keeping or move. Most moved because producing honey had become equally or more profitable than their other crops. But those who refused to vacate were harrassed by "night riders" armed with axes and kerosene who swooped down under the cover of darkness and destroyed the hives. The vigilante-like enforcement of an ill-conceived law was an annoynig concern but failed to seriously impede the progress of the honey business and San Diego county continued as the world's foremost producer for many years.



"There were 33 hives when Harbison came to visit San Diego in 1869. By 1873, there were 1,854 hives and 1,180 belonged to Harbison and Clark. In 1874, Harbison alone had 2,000 colonies and five apiaries from near the border to Fallbrook."

FIRST RUMBLINGS OF GROSSMONT SETTLEMENT

The Birdseye House - Grossmont's "Official" Beginning - The Hervey Parke Story - Hervey Parke Comes to California - The Alta Ranch - Villa Caro Rancho - Passing of Hervey Parke - Enter, Ed Fletcher.

After the Mexican-American war, a vast sea of unclaimed land remained on the outskirts of San Diego with skeletons of once glorious Mexican Ranchos interspersed here and there.

These former huge cattle spreads, abandoned by most vaqueros after the Americans assumed control of the area, were viewed by investors and land speculators as "juicy plums waiting to be plucked." But potential buyers quickly discovered serious drawbacks that discouraged all but the most hardened businessmen from gambling on ownership. In the first place, homeless adventurers and displaced veterans were content to begin life anew by simply "squatting" on land they considered to be free land. Secondly, the few Mexican vaqueros who stayed behind after

In 1897, bristling activity along the foothills of back country mountains foreshadowed their rapid development in the near future. Water from the flume (foreground) encouraged agricultural development (background). The railroad (center) simplified the shipment of agricultural products.

the war tending small herds of straggling livestock couldn't understand why they should leave.

Evicting squatters, however, was a minor inconvenience compared to the problem of establishing legal boundary lines for the land that buyers assumed they had purchased. Only a few ambitious Americans were willing to confront the judicial horrors necessary to clear title for the old Mexican ranchos that originally were laid out during a period when no definitive borders were considered necessary. Bitter disputes continued from the end of the Mexican War until the beginning of the Civil War when they were temporarily halted, only to reappear at its conclusion and continue at a stepped-up pace. As noted, some cases such as Lankershim's purchase of the El Cajon Rancho were carried as far as the United States Supreme Court before being resolved. Most disputes were settled by 1875 and the new legal owners then were able to divide their lands into smaller, affordable parcels which could be sold.

Grossmont's "First Family" - The Birdseyes

Among the first to acquire an available parcel was Enoch Lane Birdseye and his wife Illa who purchased a 5-acre plot "16 miles east of San Diego, (for a) residence in Cajon, town or P.O. of San Diego." Today, the location would be on the northwest foothills of Grossmont, south of the present freeway — thus, the Birdseyes became Grossmont's first residents, a little more than a quarter of a century before Grossmont became known as Grossmont.

On April 12, Benjamin P. Hill, an El Cajon farmer, sold the land to the Birdseyes for $250, presenting them with a deed showing boundary descriptions even more vague than the non-definitive borders described on title papers of many of the old Mexican grants:

> 12 April, 1875
>
> BENJAMIN P. HILL to (ILLA) M. BIRDSEYE.
>
> Beginning at a stake and pile of stones on the south side of the road in the Cajon Valley at the eastern end of a small flat piece of land near the top of what is now known as "Cajon Grade." Running thence in a southerly direction to a large pile or natural deposit of granite (sic) boulders situated on a knoll on the side hill. Upon the top of the highest boulder there (sic) being a small cross, thus (+). Thence in a westerly direction in a line parallel to and following the line of said Cajon Road, and of a width equal to the length of the line first herein mentioned to a line drawn north and south passing through a large granite boulder near the south side of said road at a point

> east of a low damp place in said road, there being upon the top of the granite (sic) boulder last named a small cross thus (+) and from thence north along said line to said Cajon Road, thence along the line of said road to the place of beginning containing about five acres of land, more or less.

On May 25, 1875, Enoch Birdseye was entered in the Great Register of local citizens, listing him as a 33-year-old farmer from Norwalk County, Ohio. It naturally failed to divulge the fact that the Birdseyes were attracted to the local area because of their hope that its alleged cure-all climate would help Enoch who was suffering from an advanced case of consumption.

Because of Enoch's burning desire to cheat the devil and complete construction before his illness worsened, he began building immediately. Unfortunately, he overtaxed himself and died on November 27, 1875.

The widow Birdseye gradually overcame her personal tragedy, and on May 11, 1877, she sold her house to Amaziah Knox for $800 in gold coin. Knox had moved from San Francisco in 1872 at the urging of his old friend Isaac Lankershim who wanted him to manage the 27,000 acre El Cajon rancho that he had purchased in 1868. Knox, himself in frail health, jumped at the opportunity to come south to a warmer climate. Besides, he said: "Lankershim's offer was too good to refuse, going so far as offering me $30 per month."

The deal apparently opened the door for a short romantic interlude, and Illa and Amaziah were married a month later, on June 16, 1877. She and her two small children moved to The Corners, a hotel built in El Cajon by Knox in 1876.

On January 18, 1886 Amaziah and Illa Knox sold the Grossmont home to A. A. Bliss. Some historians associate this sale with Governor Waterman who allegedly bought the house for use as a stopping off place during his frequent trips from San Diego to his Stonewall Mine in Julian.

Years later, the original Birdseye house burned to the ground.

Grossmont's "Official" Beginning

In 1902, William Gross supplied needed monetary assistance to Ed Fletcher enabling him to finalize the purchase of a large section of land from the estate of Hervey C. Parke who had passed away three years earlier. The land package consisted mainly of a ranch property known as "Villa Caro Rancho" along with parts of an earlier acquisition known as

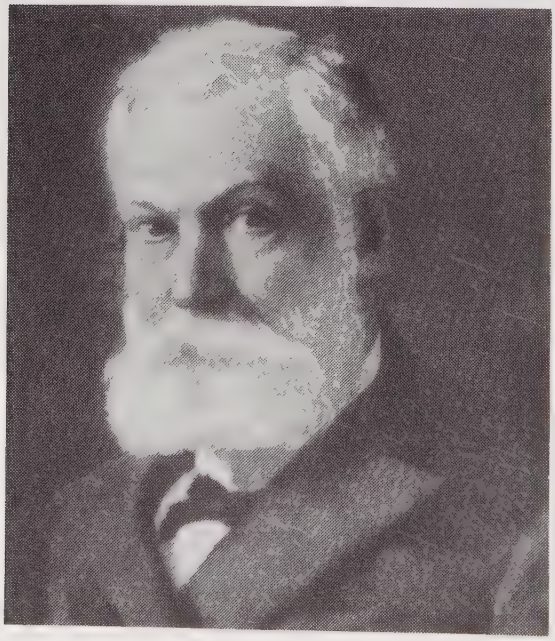
the "Alta Ranch." In appreciation of Gross' financial help, Fletcher named his new property "Mount Gross" then changed it in 1906 to a more harmonious "Grossmont."

Since today's Grossmont began as Hervey Parke's ranch property, his story is an appropriate beginning for our story about the beautiful little mountain nestled away in the southwestern corner of the country.

The Hervey Parke Story

In 1865, 38-year-old Hervey Parke moved his family south to the warmer climate of Detroit where he began a new career that would establish him as "one of the most sucessful businessmen in Michigan during the 19th century." He bought a half-interest in a small drug manufacturing business and hired a 22-year-old salesman, George S. Davis. Soon thereafter, the two men reorganized the company as Parke, Davis & Company. The concern rapidly grew into a worldwide operation and became the largest biological and pharmaceutical manufacturer in the country.

In its Sepetember, 1886, issue, the *Magazine of Western History* noted that "the cares of this great business have very largely monopolized Mr. Parke's time since he first engaged in it and his increasing fortune has been to a great degree devoted to its extension. Mr. Parke has accumulated a handsome fortune, which has not lessened the simplicity of his character and manners. He lives handsomely as is due to himself, and gives liberally and quite without display to every worthy



Hervey Parke (left) was elated over the land he purchased in California. When he returned to Detroit in 1892, he described his new "Alta Ranch" in such glowing terms that his partner, George S. Davis, later traveled to California and bought the nearby Jamacha Rancho which he renamed "Villa Karma" and where he planted citrus groves and bred fine horses.

Hervey Parke died in 1899 after he had added many improvements to his ranch but before he could move his family from Detroit to enjoy the fruits of his efforts.

cause and person. The unceasing industry and punctilous honor of Mr. Parke's life have won the reward of wealth, and wealth won without spot or blemish upon character or repute. Still in the vigor of his years, he lives surrounded by loving kindred and affectionate friends, and enjoying the respect of all who know him."

Hervey Parke Comes to California

After the mild "fever" resulting from the Julian gold discovery in 1869 had subsided, travelers continued to swarm into the country east of San Diego attracted by the dynamic panoramas, idyllic climate conditions, the vigorous apple orchards and vineyards of the Cuyamaca mountains, etc. Among those smitten by the appealing conditions to be found there was Colonel James L. Randlett who, years before, had selected La Mesa as the place to enjoy his retirement years.

The importance of Colonel Randlett's role in local history centered around his friendship with Hervey Parke. Parke made an annual trip to California to visit his brother, Lyman Parke, and his sister, Mrs. Sarah Parke French and during each trip, he stayed with Colonel Randlett at his elaborate La Mesa home known as "Rosehedge Manor." During their 1892 visit, conversation turned to the subject of local properties as an investment. They noted that values had sky-rocketed during the 1880s, then plummeted sharply during the crash of 1888 to their existing low

level. It was a time, they agreed, to speculate while land values were depressed, then add improvements to property they had acquired while awaiting the price spiral to rise. The two men decided to spend a few days touring the back country and inspecting land parcels that were for sale.

Soon after the start of their journey, Parke realized that San Diego's back country had more to offer than the potential for economic gain. He came face-to-face with the many facets of real wealth — climate, scenic beauty, ect. — that would provide him with a comfortable existence during his retirement years.

As they traveled over the grade between the villages of El Cajon and La Mesa, they passed a small section of land owned by Colonel Randlett. Adjoining it was a 600-acre plot owned by Dr. C. M. Johnson's El Cajon Vineyard Company which was available to buy. The two good friends agreed that it would be a pleasant arrangement if each owned adjacent property and after brief consideration, Parke decided to buy the Vineyard Company land. Soon thereafter he became the new owner of a beautiful homesite he named the "Alta Ranch."

The Alta Ranch

While he contemplated the purchase of the land, very little escaped the keen business sense of Hervey Parke. One important item that caught his attention was the large receiving and storage water reservoir of the San Diego Flume Company located on the property. The city of San Diego received its primary water supply through piping from this terminal. In exchange for allowing the facility to remain on his property, Parke would receive the right to five "miner inches" of flume water which he could pump into his own distributing reservoir (the Lotus Pond), thence through a maze of piping and hydrants to all improved areas of the ranch.

Four-year-old lemon trees planted on the rolling hills of the Alta Ranch.

The spring-fed lake on the Alta Ranch generally was known as the Lotus Pond and served as a private reservoir. In later years, stage plays were performed on a large platform built alongside. Later the pond was used as a backdrop for a dance pavilion, then as a set for movie scenes. Finally, it was part of an antique shop and today serves as a scenic part of a popular seafood restaurant.

The Lotus Pond offered a fine recreational area for Thelma Jones Todd and her brothers during the time they lived on the Alta Ranch.

Along with water from the flume, the Lotus Pond provided ample irrigation for the citrus groves.

Hervey Parke could forsee that a perpetual supply of free water when combined with the fine, deep top soil of his rolling hills would offer a great opportunity for agricultural development on a most favorable economic basis. Thus, after the land purchase was completed, an extensive planting program quickly began and by 1895 included about 70 acres in fruit, 70 acres in grain, and the remaining 460 acres in pasture land. 40 acres were planted in "Alta Lemons" generally conceded to be of equal quality to any other brand on the market. 30 acres were set out in grapefruit, oranges, apricot, peach, apple and other deciduous trees. And there were grapes and other berries.

Another factor Parke viewed with interest was the tiny railroad stop of the *San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway* located on the property. This would become known as the "Alta Station" and provided a switch and siding for fruit and other freight. A daily train between San Diego, El Cajon, and points east scheduled a stop there which facilitated shipping and transportation matters between the ranch and other services such as the post office, grocery store, blacksmith shoppe, drug and hardware stores, etc.

The installation and maintenance of Hervey Parke's agricultural project required a sizeable work force and necessary housing facilities. Storage and indoor work space also was necessary. Thus construction of outbuildings began quickly and was completed by 1895. Included

Packing labels for "Alta Lemons", considered the highest quality.

The "Alta Station" of the San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway was little more than a loading platform but it solved most of the ranch's shipping and transportation problems. Note the flume running alongside.

was the ranch manager's residence or "ranch house" which consisted of eight rooms, a large attic, and a covered porch on three sides. The "pump house," also known as the engine house or tool house, was built alongside the lotus pond (reservoir) to distribute irrigation water to the various outlying orchards as well as providing storage for mechanical paraphernalia and engines. The most pretentious structure of all was the elaborate "barn" or fruit packing house with the capacity for curing and handling three carloads of lemons at one time. It also included living accommodations for a large number of ranch hands and provided barn space for the horses. Carriages, farm implements, and harness also were stored there.

The ranch house was among the most impressive structures in the area during the early 1890s, second only to the Alta Ranch's beautiful "barn." Given the name of the "bungalow," it originally was built to accommodate Parke family members during their visits to California

The "Bungalow" originally was used to accomodate visiting family members.

The impressive "barn" originally functioned as a packing house for the Alta Brand lemons as well as providing housing for the ranch workers and accommodations for the Parke family during their visits to California. The latter function was transferred to the Villa Caro ranch house after it was added to the Parke holdings in 1895.

The "Lotus Pond," so-called because it fostered the only growth of natural water plants in the area, was a small lake used as a reservoir on the western end of the original Parke ranch. The pump house is seen at the center, the barn at the right, and the ranch foreman's quarters at the left rear.

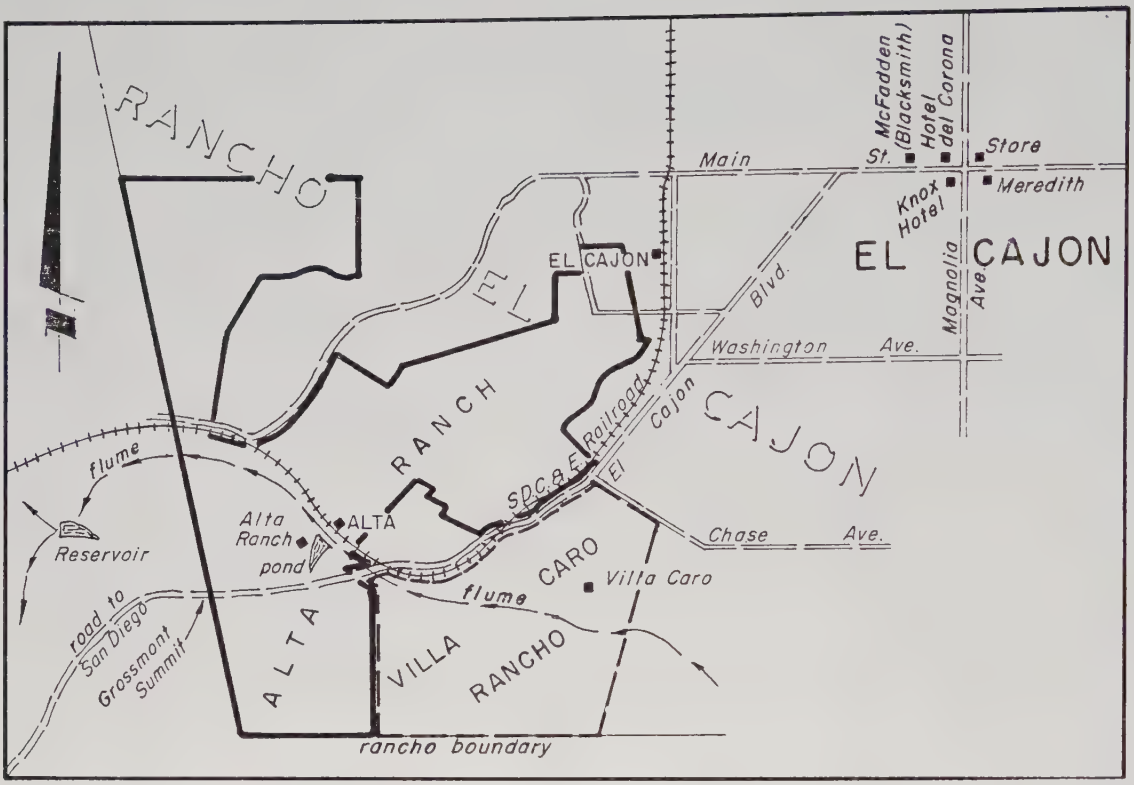
After the turn of the century, the Alta Ranch foreman's house was occupied by several prominent local families beginning with Mr. and Mrs. Miles, sister of Frank Sieberling, owner of the Sieberling Tire Company. They were followed by the Huneks who operated a popular San Diego haberdashery for years. Note the flume in the background and the Murray Hill Wall in the foreground.

from Detroit. However, in 1895 when Hervey Parke assumed ownership of the Villa Caro Rancho, that function was transferred to the "Villa Caro" ranch house, the spectacular centerpiece of the new property. The bungalow, then, became the Alta Ranch manager's residence.

Villa Caro Rancho

In 1895, the acquisition of part of S. M. "Sam" Marshall's neighboring ranch that included a striking Victorian mansion known as "Villa Caro " was a most important addition to Hervey Parke's local property holdings. The elaborate home was a local landmark, so well-known that Marshall's ranch frequently was referred to as the "Villa Caro Rancho."

The opportunity for Parke to add Villa Caro to his holdings was due to Sam Marshall's accumulated indebtedness totalling more than



Hervey Parke's Alta Ranch — 1895

At the time of his death in 1899, Hervey Parke's estate included his original purchase of land bought from Dr. C.M. Johnson in 1893 as shown by the heavy black outline. It also included the portion of S. M. "Sam" Marshall's ranch he aquired in 1895 as indicated by the dotted outline.

Hervey Parke named his original purchase the *Alta Ranch,* and his 1895 acquisition was called the *Villa Caro Rancho* because of the elaborate ranchouse know as "Villa Caro" was its well-known centerpiece.

$85,000 in unpaid promissory notes, liens, and foreclosures which had to be satisfied. In 1895, the Villa Caro ranch was involved in an action by the Northern Counties Trust Company "to recover $35,953.61 alleged due for the foreclosure of the Villa Caro Ranch in El Cajon." During 1893, 1894, and 1895, liens were filed against Sam Marshall's properties for $10,721.85, $19,000, $37,192.68, $5,000, and finally $35,953.61.

In order to acquire the Villa Caro ranchhouse and 185 acres of surrounding land, Hervey Parke provided Sam Marshall with some cash to satisfy his most pressing creditors and placed a first mortgage on the property involved. Marshall, in turn, transferred the first mortgage to the First National Bank of Chicago as partial collateral for a loan of $115,000 with which he planned to clear up other obligations. In the midst of these transactions, Sam Marshall died.

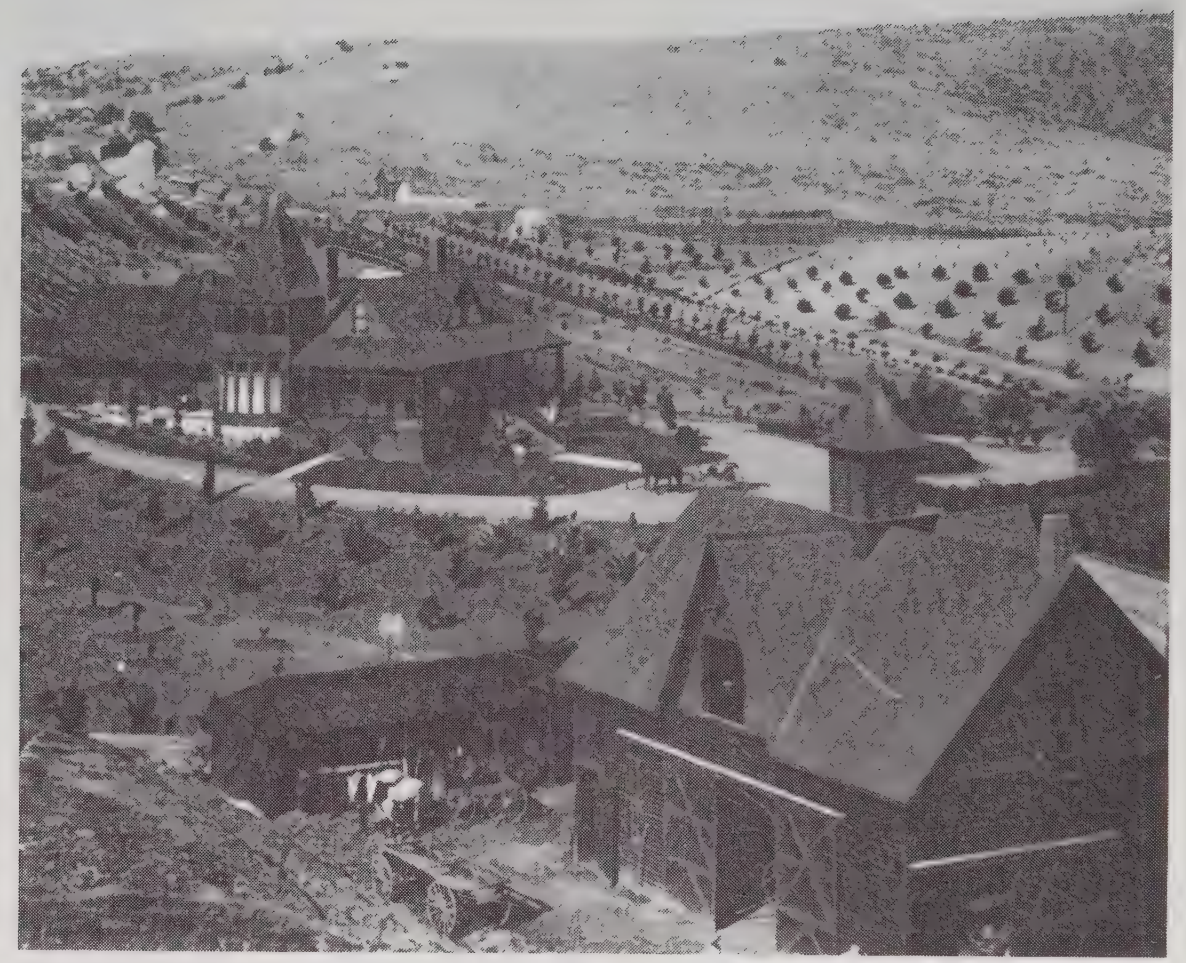
The Passing of Hervey Parke

A *San Diego Union* article dated February 9, 1899, reported Hervey Parke's untimely death the previous day while visiting his old friend, Colonel Randlett, was "caused by the grip which resulted in heart failure. Mr. Parke had come from Detroit just a few days ago. Last Saturday while driving out to his ranch from this city (San Diego), he was taken with a severe chill and, for temporary shelter, stopped at Colonel Randletts's home where he was given every attention, not only by members of the family but also by physicians and his own son and daughter. Mr. Parke's age was 71 years and 26 days."

The article added that Hervey Parke's estate "was valued at more than a million dollars, a large part being the appraised worth of the Villa Caro home and the Alta Ranch."

Another *San Diego Union* story dated December 12, 1899, noted that a parcel of 180 acres of land from the Parke estate was sold to Mary D. Engle by Fred J. Smith for $70,000. The land involved in this sale was part of the original Alta Ranch since the Villa Caro Rancho land remained unsettled in the courts until 1902.

The addition of the Villa Caro ranchouse was among the many improvements made by Hervey Parke to his Alta Ranch.



In 1895, Hervey Parke gave financially-troubled Sam Marshall cash and a first mortgage variously listed between $85,000 and $125,000 for Marshall's Villa Caro ranchouse (left center) and its lavish imported furnishings along with several outbuildings and 185 acres of citrus trees and vineyards.

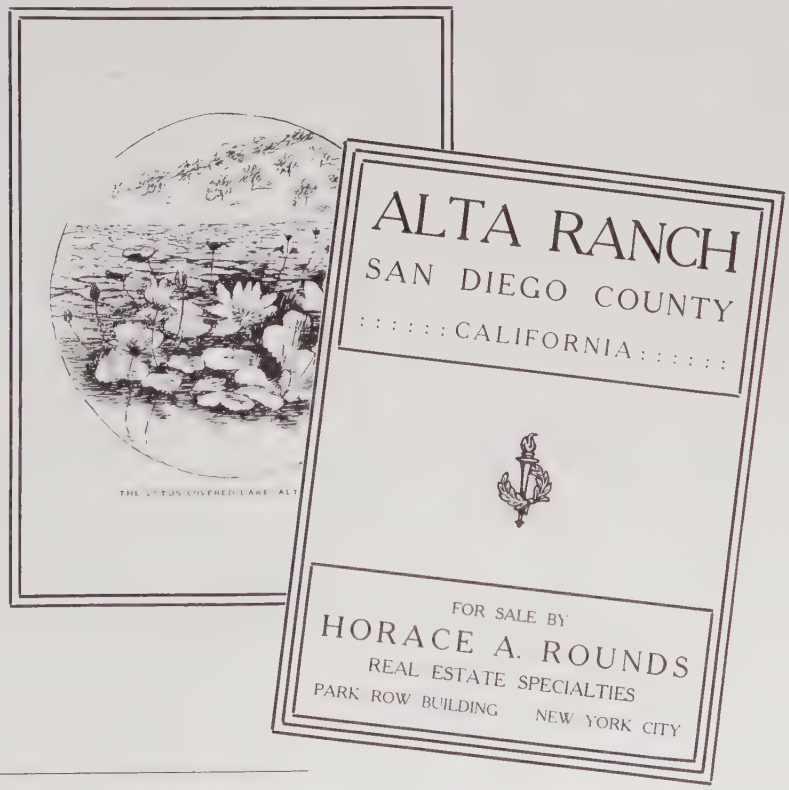
With the national economy stagnating at the turn of the century, the Villa Caro property received less and less attention. The First National Bank of Chicago "took an action in Superior Court against the Villa Caro ranch for the foreclosure of a mortgage against 185 acres in El Cajon Valley. Plaintiff claims that a mortgage on the premises was given to Sam Marshall who transferred it to the bank." With both Marshall and Parke dead and surviving members of the estate unfamiliar with the arrangement and refusing to pay off the mortgage, the bank's legal action remained unsettled. The main house, Villa Caro, had been vacant during the last four years of Hervey Parke's life and, according to the El Cajon News, "was prepared for occupancy by the Parke family only after his death." Mrs. Parke and the children moved into the house and stayed for several months although they left for extended periods to care for estate matters in Detroit. As time passed, they spent less and less time at the ranch and finally dismissed the ranch hands and allowed the property to deteriorate.

By 1902, the Parke ranches in all their splendor had passed into history. The First National Bank of Chicago was anxious to settle the account and the Parke family members were equally anxious to close the estate. A New York realtor, Horace Rounds, was chosen to dispose of the remaining Parke property consisting primarily of the "Villa Caro Rancho" and most of the original "Alta Ranch."

The package offered for sale had cost Hervey Parke at least $100,000. Included in the deal was the elaborately furnished mansion used as the ranch headquarters, (Villa Caro) and several outbuildings against which Sam Marshall originally had borrowed some $125,000. And there were "several hundred acres of land" including the mountain that would become known as "Grossmont."

Also included in the small brochure published by Horace Rounds in 1900 was a description of that portion of the Alta Ranch not previously sold and explaining that "it must be sold now to close the estate, and a very great sacrifice will be made to dispose of it quickly. I prefer to name a price upon request, but will say here that many men have gone to California and paid more for very ordinary properties. It is within reach of a man who is not rich. The unfortunate fact that the owner did not live to enjoy this property has made a great opportunity to one who can use it. An opportunity that should not be neglected."

A very great sacrifice, indeed! The asking price: $11,500!



A small illustrated brochure published in 1900 described the virtues of the Alta Ranch to prospective buyers. Note the sketch of the Lotus Pond on the back cover.

The Alta Ranch in 1900

Even the inviting letter of transmittal included in the sales brochure was unable to overcome the effect of the existing economic doldrums of 1900 and the geographic isolation of the ranch land. It read:

> " This fine property was improved by one of the best known businessmen in the United States — a man accustomed to doing this well and having abundant means at his disposal. He improved Alta Ranch in the most substantial manner.
>
> "The place is entirely suitable for a rich man who will find it a delightful place to spend his spare time. The property is just as suitable, however, for one of modest fortune. It is no fancy place. It is not a 'white elephant' but a productive property, improved upon utilitarian lines.
>
> "By taking advantage of the present opportunity to buy the property at a sacrifice, he will have acquired a very fine property at the price of an indifferent one. He will make a moderate fortune upon the original purchase and by capable management he will add to it a good profit every year.
>
> "There are in the East many people who are tired of the rigors of our cilmate, whose health would be benefited by living in this land of fruit and flowers — of dry air and sunshine. They are coming to realize that they are not getting all there is for them in life. They are asking themselves whether they can afford to waste half their remaining years enduring absolute discomfort or whether they shall go where they will live longer and enjoy life more — in Southern California.
>
> "To some of these people I expect to sell this property."

Ed Fletcher overlooking El Cajon Valley in 1910 from Cape Horn, the homesite purchased by Theresa Carreno. The large granite boulder shown at the left is located at today's intersection of El Granito and Sunset Avenues.

Enter, Ed Fletcher

While the bank and principals were making futile attempts to sell the Parke land, a young commission merchant named Ed Fletcher closely monitored the proceedings from the sidelines. He was widely acquainted with all the ranchers in the area since his work involved selling "futures" on their upcoming harvests. He enjoyed particularly close relationships with Dr. C. M. Johnson who founded the El Cajon Vineyard Company and the late Sam Marshall who had fallen into bad times before his death in 1897. Both men owned property adjacent to the Alta Ranch that allowed Fletcher to become familiar with the Parke property. Further, Fletcher was involved in the sale of the popular "Alta Brand Lemons."

When Ed Fletcher learned that the courts were willing to settle their interest in the Parke estate for a paltry $11,500, he was stunned. The ridiculously low figure was far less than the value of the land and represented only a fraction of Parke's overall investment. Without hesitation, he decided to buy it!

Then a chilling problem presented itself — Fletcher didn't have $11,500. And the local banks didn't share his enthusiasm to the extent of loaning him the money. The approach of the banks was tempered by memories of the Crash of 1888 just thirteen years earlier when land values dropped to zero overnight.

Fletcher's last flickering hope of financing depended on the decision of Joe Sefton, manager of the San Diego Trust and Savings Bank, who, coincidentally, was the first person 16-year-old Fletcher met upon his arrival in San Diego from Massachusetts in 1888. Their paternalistic relationship had continued smoothly during the years Fletcher worked for Nason & Smith Produce, but suddenly was interrupted by their widely divergent opinions regarding the purchase of Hervey Parke's Alta Ranch property.

Fletcher argued that the land on the valley flatlands already was fully equipped to function as a prospering ranching operation with buildings, a reservoir, a railroad spur, and the flume terminal all in place. More importantly, Fletcher added, the largest part of the property was a magnificent mountainside that could be developed into an exclusive suburb of unsurpassed beauty.

Joe Sefton agreed that the Alta Ranch once was a successful enterprise, but noted that it had deteriorated badly from lack of upkeep since Hervey Parke's death. The cost of returning it to its earlier condition, Sefton suggested, would be equal to or more than the amount Fletcher wanted to borrow to buy it.

They also disagreed over the potential of the mountainside which Fletcher claimed he could develop profitably into a fine residential area. The bank, with good reason, claimed that without water, utilities, or access roads, the suggestion of a subdivision was "sheer folly." Their evaluation concluded that there were too many boulders, steep inclines, and deep ravines to allow any kind of residential settlement and certainly would restrict any ranching activity. In a word, Joe Sefton said, the mountain was "useless."

Without help from Joe Sefton, Fletcher's hope of buying Hervey Parke's ranch and his dreams of a magnificent mountainside development along its southern boundary began to fade away.

In 1901, the matter remained in limbo while he returned to his hometown of Littleton, Massachusetts, to visit his family and childhood friends. If he sought to attract eastern capital for his land venture, it was not forthcoming, and soon he was wending his way back to San Diego.

Enroute, he stopped at Yellowstone Park where he met another traveler, William Gross, a successful theatrical impresario from the east. When Gross mentioned he was searching for some sort of investment that would keep him busy during his upcoming retirement, Fletcher pounced on the opportunity to discuss the natural beauty, climate, and other virtues of San Diego county. He lost no time in inviting his new-found friend to visit him in San Diego, and Bill Gross lost no time in accepting his invitation.

Fletcher recounted in his *Memoirs*:

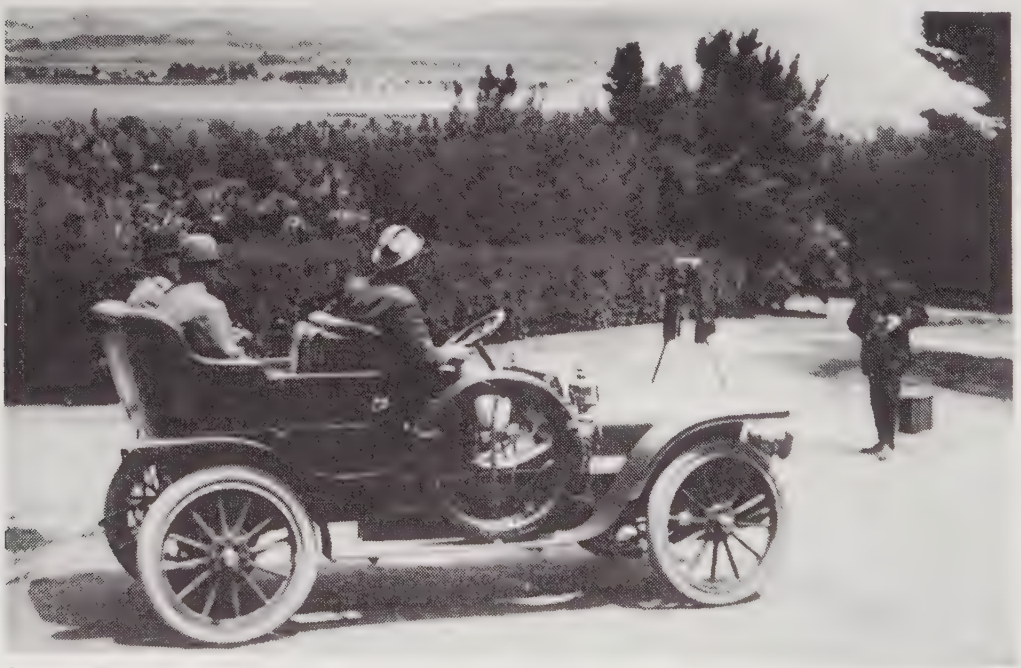
> "During Gross' visit, I took him on a three-day trip to San Diego's back country in a horse and buggy. We were returning home on the last afternoon when he volunteered that he had quite a lot of money saved up and would like to come to San Diego to live someday.
>
> "It so happened that the Villa Caro Rancho of several hundred acres including what is now Grossmont, also a beautiful home in El Cajon valley at the foot of Grossmont was for sale cheap. The price of $11,500 cash included the home and its furniture, all of which had cost the owner $85,000 five years before. At one time, the First National Bank of Chicago had a mortgage on the property of $125,000, according to records.
>
> "It included 40 acres of oranges and lemons; it had not been irrigated for months and was badly neglected. As we were passing the property, I showed it to him. The house and grounds were most attractive and he fell in love with the place immediately. When I told him the price, he said, "let's buy it!'"

With half the purchase price guaranteed by William Gross' personal check, Joe Sefton agreed to finance the second half for Ed Fletcher. At that moment, the dormant existence of the mountain that covered the largest part of the property was ended.

Gross' position in the financial arrangement made Fletcher's dream possible at a time when almost everyone agreed that the idea of developing the "useless" hillside land was, in kindest terms, ridiculous. Thus, in recognition of his help, the mountain became a place with a name . . . Mount Gross . . . which endured until the first subdivision was filed in 1906 when the name was changed to Grossmont. Future recordings in 1908 and 1910 were entitled Grossmont Park Subdivisions I and II, and in 1911, a Villa Caro Subdivision of 60 acres was filed.

The four important civic leaders in 1908 seen parked in front of Villa Caro include La Mesa land developer Charlie Collier (driver), Ed Fletcher (seated alongside him), William Gross (behind Collier in the back seat), and the other passenger tentatively identified as U. S. Grant II, builder of the U. S. Grant Hotel in 1904.

Source: Photograph from Ed Fletcher collection, U. C. S. D., 1981.



Charlie Collier has left the 1906 Maxwell to snap his own version of the scene shown in the photograph at the top of the page.

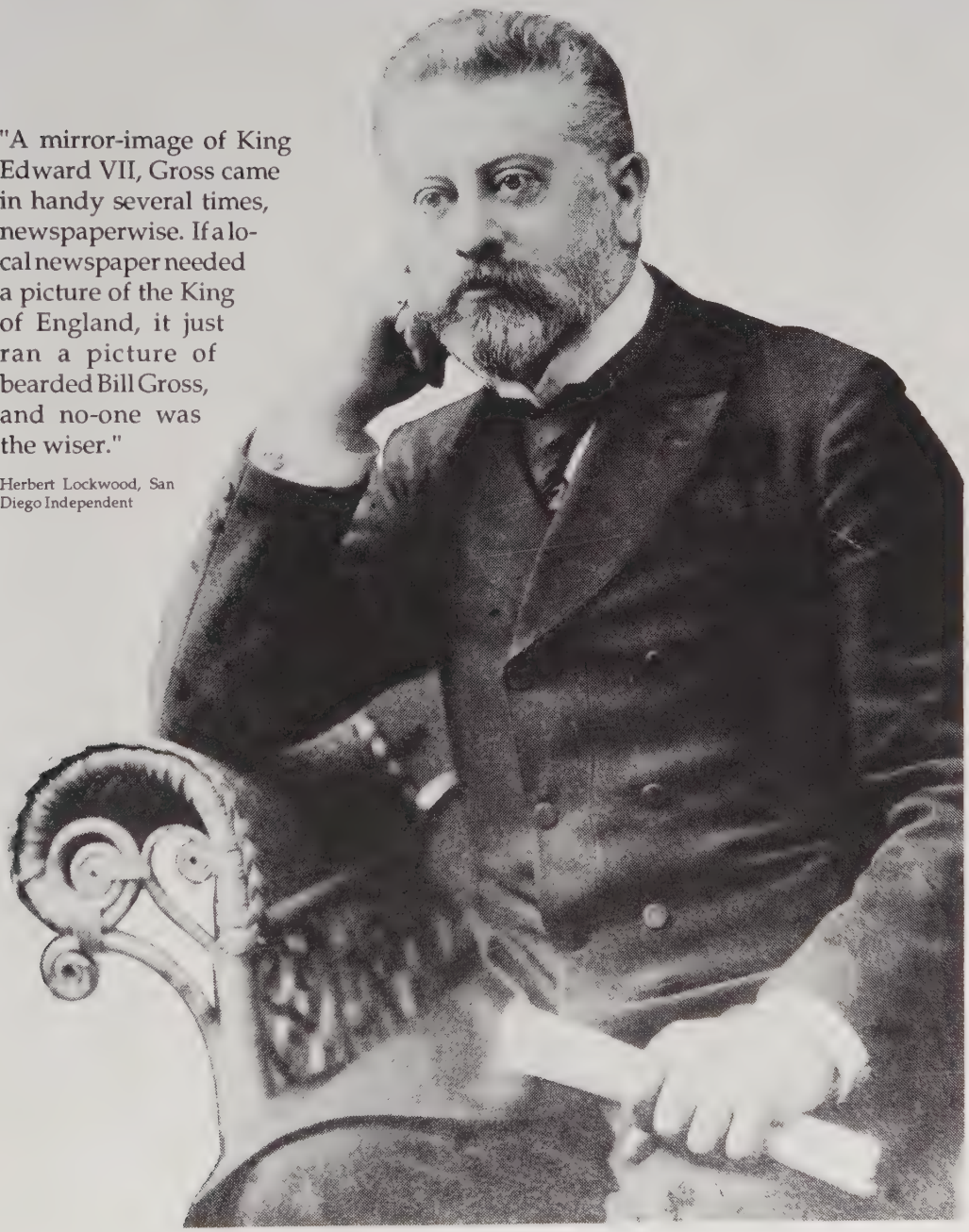
Source: Photograph copy provided by San Diego Public Library, 1983.

"LORD OF THE MOUNTAIN"

The chance meeting of Ed Fletcher and William Gross at Yosemite Valley in 1902 opened new horizons for both men. For young Fletcher, it signalled the end of a routine existence as a produce salesman and the beginning of a new and exciting career in land development. For elderly William Gross, it signalled the end of an illustrious career in the theater and the beginning of a less-taxing period of semi-retirement.

"A mirror-image of King Edward VII, Gross came in handy several times, newspaperwise. If a local newspaper needed a picture of the King of England, it just ran a picture of bearded Bill Gross, and no-one was the wiser."

Herbert Lockwood, San Diego Independent



William Gross visiting with Madame Schumann-Heink on the veranda-style porch of his home in 1913.

Again, Madame Schumann-Heink and William Gross enjoying a relaxing conservation on the front porch of the singer's home in 1915.

William Gross and a friend parked alongside the huge boulder symbolizing the Grossmont Summit.

Their partnership brought together a coalition of two men with outwardly different temperments, yet as a team they worked smoothly together. Gross had invaluable contacts which formed the nucleus of a future colony of famous literary and musical entertainers while Fletcher capably handled *en situ* problems such as building roads, planting trees and having power and water made available.

Gross' active participation in the Grossmont development was terminated at his request in 1911 and he was content to quietly oversee the continuing progress being made by Ed Fletcher. By 1916, Gross had realized between $30,000 and $40,000 profit on his original investment with Ed Fletcher in Hervey Parke's ranches. It was a figure, he stated, that exceeded the amount of money he had earned in any other earlier business venture before his retirement to the west.

That year, Ed Fletcher embarked on a new development program that would add the adjoining Mount Helix to his ever-expanding portfolio. Gross was invited to join as a partner in the new venture but declined with thanks, noting that his once-conspicuous red beard had turned white indicating it was time to sit back and rest on his laurels.

He continued to participate in social and civic affairs and wrote a well-received romantic novel entitled *The Conquest of California*, published in 1930. In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt took time away from his duties to write Bill Gross a fan letter concerning his book but it was never received. Bill Gross had passed away two months earlier.

The 17' high pile of thousands of logs visible above the water line was an impressive sight, particularly to those who realized twice as many logs were beneath the surface. An average raft drew 28' or more and could be towed into the harbor only at high tide.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR EARLY PROBLEMS

Solving the Lumber Dilemma - The First Rafts - Economic Benefits of Benson's Rafts - End of The Rafting Era - The Redwood Story - Shortage of Other Building Materials -

As could be expected, several problems confronted Ed Fletcher and Bill Gross that had to be solved before their Grossmont development could make marked progress. Any significant settlement of the mountainside destined to become "a residential area of unsurpassed beauty" depended on the construction of homes. But there was an acute shortage of lumber and other building materials at the turn of this century. And even if this weren't the case, the deep ravines and steep inclines of the mountain posed almost impossible logistic problems until some semblance of a road was completed. Creative solutions were necessary begining with the lumber shortage.

Solving the Lumber Dilemma

At the turn of the century, huge building projects such as the Fronton Palace and the U. S. Grant Hotel required large quantities of timbers be imported for their construction. And the strong demand for residential homes and other smaller structures for mushrooming county developments such as Grossmont placed an added strain on the lumber supply problem. Although home-building on Grossmont did not begin until 1906, the real shortage of pine, cedar, and redwood posed a threat of delays or even possible abandonment of construction should the shortage continue for any length of time.

Despite the extensive stands of native oaks and pine covering the Cuyamaca Mountains east of San Diego, the size and quality of the trees failed to meet the requirements of the builders who, therefore, were forced to look to the rain-drenched forests of Oregon for most of their supply. Surprisingly, there was less expense and effort involved in shipping lumber from the Northwest by high-masted schooners than there was in transporting the Cuyamaca trees down the fifty miles of treacherous back country terrain to San Diego's waterfront sawmills.

Until San Diego awakened from its economic depression of the 1890s, small lumber schooners filled the needs of the town. But the sudden building boom at the turn of the century created a demand far greater than could be supplied in the cargo holds of the small ships and

the long periods of time between their scheduled arrivals. Building larger schooners wouldn't increase their capacity enough to justify the additional cost. And shipments by railroads were too expensive. In summary, builders faced a dilemma . . .

In 1904, good fortune smiled. A man named Simon Benson, wealthy owner of immense forests of standing timber and logging equipment along the Columbia River, was vacationing at the Hotel del Coronado. He could foresee that San Diego's dynamic growth soon would require a huge amount of lumber which, coincidentally, he could furnish. He also recognized the problem of shipping by schooner or railroad, noting, "I couldn't control the freight rates to get my lumber to San Diego more cheaply. This was one thing I could not seem to solve."

With a potential fortune in the offing, Benson decided to revive an old idea of shipping timbers by securing them together to form a raft that could be towed. The concept had worked well years before for smaller "river rafts," but earlier attempts to form "sea-going rafts" were only partially successful. To solve his problem, he would have to build rafts

Several interesting features associated with the log rafts are seen in this 1922 photograph from the collection of John Rimoldi (seated third from the right in the second row). First, the size of the chains needed to secure the logs together is shown in the center foreground. The 4" by 12" finished planks were used to form a platform on which the cedar shingles, fir lathing, telephone poles, and other "free cargo" were carried. Many tons of chains were shipped back to the Oregon cradling operation by rail or lumber schooner.

more than twice as large as ever tried before. To meet the challenge, he brought together various people who had been instrumental in earlier rafting adventures including Ole Johann Evenson who later became a partner in the Benson Lumber Company. The group accepted the challenge, discussed their previous efforts, eliminated earlier mistakes, and combined the best features and changes suggested by each person. A new concept of an old idea emerged.

An improved method of assembling and securing the logs using a larger "cradle" than before was constructed in a slough alongside Benson's timberland in Oregon. Extreme care was taken to load only the longest logs along the bottom and up the sides while staggering the smaller ones to give a laminated effect. A special method of chaining the logs together allowed the raft to be built "as a fish was built."

The First Rafts

The first rafts were 600 feet long and 55 feet wide and later would be increased to a length of 1,000 feet. They were towed during the summer months on a 1,100 mile journey between the Columbia River and San Diego, a trip requiring about fourteen days to complete with the assistance of the Japanese current.

San Diego's first raft arrived on September 7, 1906. As it hove into the harbor, "curious San Diegans swarmed aboard the great pile of logs, and in the melee, a few fell overboard while others collected cracked shins on slippery timbers. The City Guard played welcoming stanzas of a Souza march and the mayor and other dignitaries orated on San Diego's newest industry and the epic voyage of the Oregon-forest-in-a-bundle."

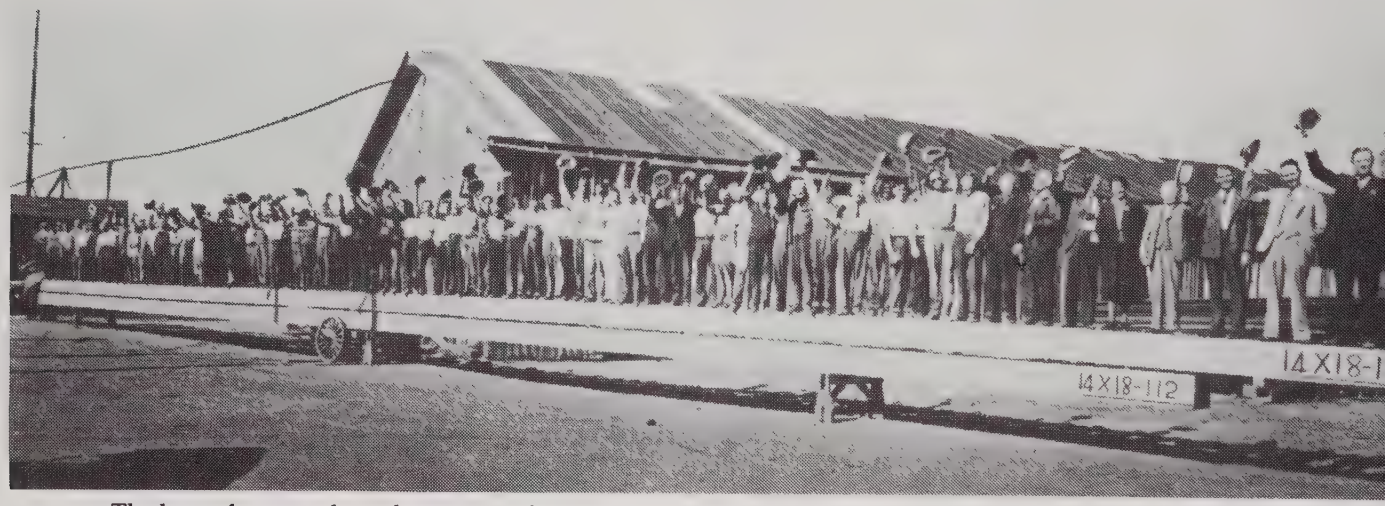
From that auspicious beginning, the log rafts continued to play a most important part in the local economy. San Diego was graduating from a small town into a bona fide city with many little townships rapidly developing on its perimeter. Its continuing growth was, in large part, due to Benson's rafted timber and sawmill which supplied high quality lumber at a reasonable price allowing construction projects to continue without interuption.

In 1925, near the mid-point of the time period of the Benson rafts, a letter signed by C. H. Woodward, cashier of the Benson Lumber Company, provided a graphic description of the amount of lumber that had been rafted to that date:

> "During the time the Benson Lumber Company has been operating, they have successfully brought to San Diego 67 rafts containing a total of 335 million feet of lumber

which is the equivalent of transferring an enormous forest to this city. The quantity of lumber is sufficient to build a total of 37,000 six room houses . . ."

At the time of this letter, the Water Company listed a total of 27,036 metered houses in San Diego. Until the termination of the rafting operation, 53 more rafts continued to bring lumber from Benson's Oregon timberland .



The log rafts were the only means of transporting timbers more than 120 feet long which were needed as keels by the local boat-building industry. These monstrous logs served as the "backbone" of the sea-going rafts and were stored in Benson's "pond" adjacent to the mill. Note the lengths of the 118 feet and 112 feet, shown above. Photograph courtesy of John F. Collins.

View taken from one of the log rafts shows the manner of transporting hundreds of telephone poles on top of the logs as extra cargo. The raft, waiting to be disassembled, is anchored in the holding pond seen in the background. The free-floating logs in the pond were easily maneuvered into position.

The Benson Lumber Company covered sixteen acres at the foot of Sigsbee Street where 230 men worked to fill the lumber orders of the growing communities in and around San Diego. At the peak of its activity, the company handled an estimated 80% of all lumber coming into the local area.

Although Simon Benson retired from the lumber operation in 1911 at the age of 58 and reliquished control to O.J.Evenson, the rafts that continued to bring lumber were known as "Benson rafts" and the sawmill continued to operate under the name of Benson Lumber Company.

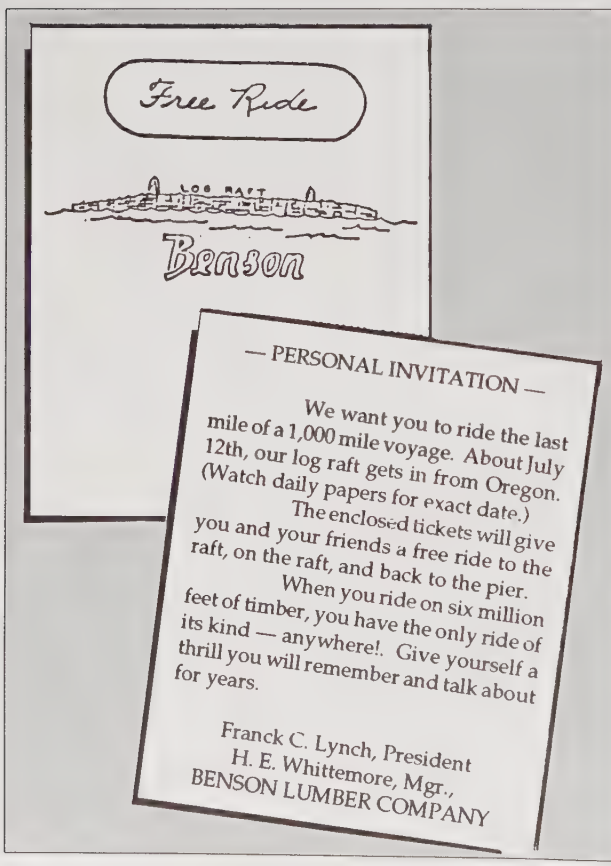
The End of the Rafting Era

The success of the rafts resulted in huge financial losses for the shipping companies who constantly pressured the government to outlaw them as hazards to navigation. They claimed coastal shipping would be endangered should a raft break apart and send mammoth timbers floating about helter-skelter with the current. But only four of the 120 rafts were lost — two by breaking apart on the high seas and two others because of fires of a suspicious origin during the summer of 1941.

The cost of locating the scattered logs of the latter two rafts and removing them from the sea caused Benson's insurance company to adjust their rates to such an exorbitant figure that to continue the rafting operation would be economically impossible. Meanwhile, modern schooners were bringing in more and more loads to competing mills and by 1950, plans to liquidate the Benson Lumber Company were announced. The grand era of the log rafts came to a close.

Fred M. White

During the early years of the Benson rafts, Fred M. White was hired as manager of the mill with the responsibility of allocating materials to


Free Ride
LOG RAFT
Benson
— PERSONAL INVITATION —
We want you to ride the last mile of a 1,000 mile voyage. About July 12th, our log raft gets in from Oregon. (Watch daily papers for exact date.)
The enclosed tickets will give you and your friends a free ride to the raft, on the raft, and back to the pier.
When you ride on six million feet of timber, you have the only ride of its kind — anywhere!. Give yourself a thrill you will remember and talk about for years.
Franck C. Lynch, President
H. E. Whittemore, Mgr.,
BENSON LUMBER COMPANY

Occasionally, a privileged person was allowed to climb aboard an incoming raft from a small boat. Or an adventuresome, uninvited hitch hiker would swim out and scramble onto it. Later by invitation only, the Benson Lumber Company would stage festive gatherings on top of a raft as it entered the harbor.

outlying lumber companies which, in turn, supplied the back country communities. He also approved allocations of ties to the railroad companies and poles to the two telephone companies. Last but not least, he had to assure a continuing supply of timbers for the important large projects such as the San Diego Hotel, the Spreckels Theatre, and the various structures for the 1915 Exposition.

Ed Fletcher relied heavily on White to provide an ample supply of lumber for the development of his Grossmont subdivisions. Their business association quickly became a lasting friendship culminating years later in their joint effort to make the Mount Helix Nature Theatre a reality.

Recognition of Redwood

Around the turn of the century, redwood generally was used for projects requiring its resistant characteristics such as wooden pipes and wooden tanks. Its aesthetic appeal was ignored by most builders located some distance away from the immediate vicinity of the forests.

Ed Fletcher, however, was familiar with the advantages of redwood in both rough and finished form. His position with the local water company involved the supervision of the Flume which, he noted, was built almost entirely of 4"x12" and 6"x12" redwood planks because they required less frequent replacement due to rotting. He also was among the first local builders to appreciate redwood in its finished form, choosing it as the predominant material for his home, the Grossmont Inn. The result was so gratifying that he suggested its use to other builders of Grossmont homes and his suggestion seldom was ignored.

During the 'teens, advances in logging equipment allowed deeper penetration of the redwood forests and improved transportation facilities increased the available supply. An educational program to promote its use in new, distant markets was undertaken through full page advertisements in leading periodicals such as the display advertisment appearing in the March 30, 1918, issue of *Literary Digest* illustrating the elegance of redwood paneling and molding in the new home of Hubert and Marie Guy. Acceptance came quickly.

Redwood used in the first Grossmont homes and redwood in use today are not the same. The first redwood cut from virgin stands provided a satin-smooth, knot-free material. But when their number was depleted and replaced by re-seeded forests, the next generation of trees obviously lacked the size and growth characteristics of the original old trees.

AS interior finish, the marvelous grain and color effects of California Redwood offer unlimited decorative possibilities, combined with permanence.

For exterior uses — siding, shingles, half timbering, mud sill, foundations — Redwood's unusual resistance to decay and fire make it unique among building materials.

In fact, for *all* building purposes — except fine floors — Redwood should be used to secure maximum service and beauty.

California Redwood is slow to ignite, slow burning and easily extinguished. Contains a *natural* preservative which resists decay. It is free from pitch, and when properly seasoned will not warp, shrink, swell or crack.

FREE BOOKLETS: Let us tell you more about this remarkable wood made from the "big trees" of California. Write today for "California Redwood Homes," "How to Finish California Redwood," "The Test by Fire" and beautiful stained samples. Please give us the names of your architect and local lumber dealers.

CALIFORNIA REDWOOD ASSOCIATION, 714 Call Building, San Francisco, Cal.

Living room in bungalow of Mrs. Hubert Guy (daughter of Mme. Schumann-Heink), Grossmont, Calif. This entire residence is finished in Redwood. Wheeler & Halley, Architects, San Diego.

California Redwood

Resists fire and rot

Ask for the Child's Story of the "big trees" of California.

Shortage of Other Building Materials

During the first decade of this century many new building supply companies were established throughout the county and shipment of inventory to them didn't pose such a formidable problem as did the shipment of structural timbers to the local mills. But hauling routine building supplies up the narrow winding road to the first selected homesites on Grossmont was a tedious and expensive procedure.

Thus, when it came time to select finishing materials for facades, fireplaces, chimneys, and walls, the builders looked no further than Grossmont's boulder-strewn landscape, described by one critic as "a place of huge boulders and huger rattlesnakes." The granite rock was durable and waterproof along with being aesthetically attractive. Reducing whole or fragmented granite boulders into workable blocks was simplified by the tendency for them to break cleanly with a flat surface. The only tools required were steel chisels and feathering wedges; the physical labor was provided by Mexican craftsmen with oversized biceps able to wield a 12-pound sledge hammer from dawn to dusk.

And after it was hand-hewn into flat faced building blocks, it was easily worked. As far as the rattlesnakes were concerned, most left as soon as the building commotion began.

Supervision of the Mexican workers and laying up the finished block was accomplished by skilled masons who, in many cases, were attracted to the Southern California area because of ample employment opportunities. The demand for skilled masons attracted a man named Grant who, before his retirement in the early 1900s, was considered Vermont's finest stone-cutter and widely known for his creative tombstones. At Grossmont he concentrated on fireplaces and work in more visible areas. Other masons such as DuBois & Sons were less delicate workers but were in demand for the more functional areas such as retaining walls.

The beauty of Grossmont's boulders was recognized by Samuel Parsons, nationally recognized landscape engineer, in 1911 when he was invited to inspect the first Grossmont Park developments. He wrote:

> "I have been in San Diego several times during the past eight years, but what especially attracts me is the wonderful mass of boulders of every shape and outline that characterizes the territory to such a marked degree. It is the boulder groups which, in the long run, dwellers of Grossmont will find their most precious possession."

Hauling building materials up the winding first trails of Grossmont proved to be an expensive and tedious operation that prompted early builders to seek out other usuable materials such as the granite rock found in abundance at every building site.

Over the years, his prophecy has proven correct. Random boulders now serve majestically as centerpieces for fountains, fish ponds, patios, or simply highlighting otherwise-ordinary flower beds. Impressive clusters of granite soon became an identifying symbol of Grossmont.

Perhaps too trivial to mention is the appeal of the boulders to children. Return to old movies or snapshots and invariably the subject of junior triumphantly perched atop a boulder will appear with his dismayed parents cringing in the background.

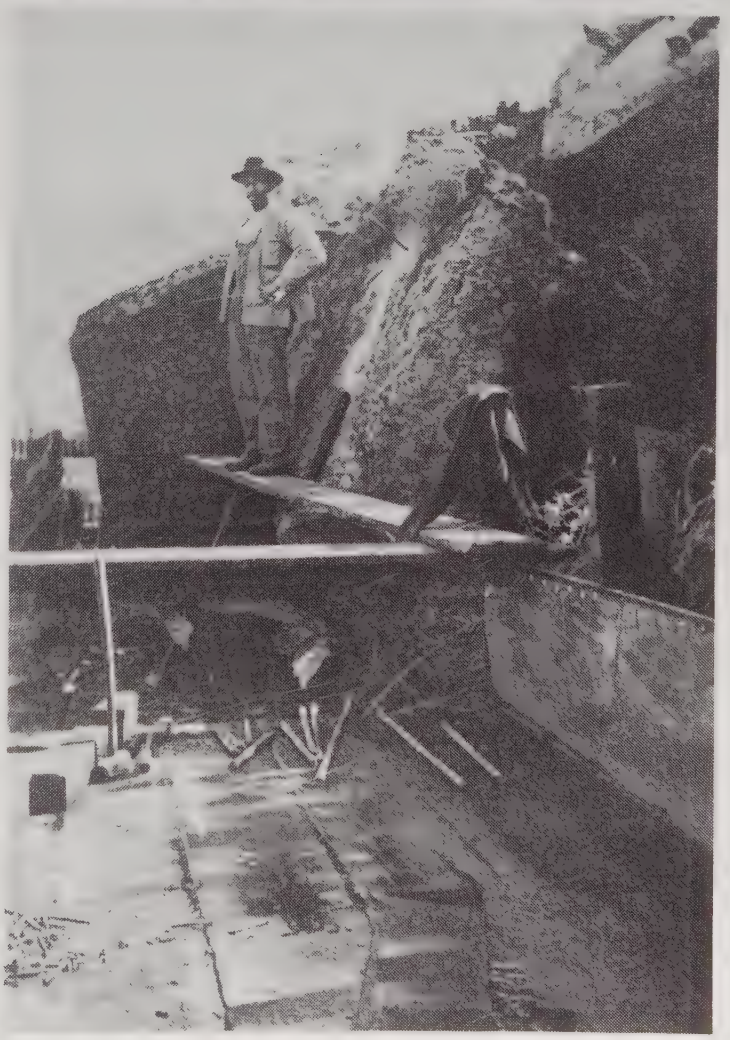
As mentioned, builders often were confronted by boulders located where the house was scheduled to be built. The simplest solution was to construct the house around them or over them which resulted in the first "split-level" houses to appear in San Diego county. What was a detriment at first allowed planners to become more venturesome and incorporate boulders into the interior design of the house itself as part of a wall or an exciting added attraction to a lanai or inside patio.

The photograph above showing the Schumann-Heink home on Grossmont under construction in 1911 also shows a large spherical boulder perched atop the granite formation (upper center). For the Mexican craftsman making building blocks from the native stone, the discovery of the big round chunk on top of a second and bigger boulder was a pleasant surprise. Nudging it off its lofty perch was far easier than digging a boulder of equal size out of the ground in the usual fashion.

When attempts to remove the boulder caused it to roll off and permanently wedge itself between the two boulders alongside, Mexican epitaphs must have floated across the Grossmont mountainside and further attempts to dislodge it were abandoned.

To avoid the almost impossible task of removing huge granite boulders lying in the path of a proposed house, builders fragmented them into usuable structural/decorative elements for the house itself. Native rockwork as outside facades became a distinguishing feature of many early Grossmont homes such as that of Mme. Schumann-Heink, shown above.

Native granite found on almost every Grossmont building site was readily hand-hewn into flat-faced building blocks which were often used to construct the popular *porte cocheres*. From left to right Marie Guy, Grace Bolton, Thelma Todd, Mme. Schumann-Heink, and Hubert Guy. Date: August 15, 1915.



The beauty and other virtues of Grossmont's huge boulders was somewhat offset by the threat of heavy rains dislodging them with devastating results such as the incident in 1916 when Hatfield's rain-making efforts caused a granite monster to slide into the flume. The isolated area prevented heavy equipment from reaching the scene and dynamite would do more harm than good. Thus, the big boulder was broken into smaller fragments that could be carried away. Note the feathering wedges and steel chisels on the floor of the flume.

If good fortune smiled, interrupting boulders could be moved aside to serve as part of the road's foundation; in other cases, they were a bigger problem when, as in the case of icebergs, only the tip appeared above ground.

Boulders dictated the course of many Grossmont roads. If the massive granite formations couldn't be fragmented by explosives, or buried in holes dug alongside them, or rolled down the mountainside, the roads simply were re-routed to circumvent them.

SETTLEMENT BEGINS WITH ROAD-BUILDING

New-Fangled Gasoline Machines - Road Races to Phoenix via Plank Road - First Road to Grossmont's Summit - The Name "El Granito" - Soda Pop Comes to El Granito Spring - Demise of El Granito Spring- Boulders Dictated Road Patterns - Freaky Fletcher's Frantic Flight

As noted, the original road from San Diego's harbor to the Julian goldfields was built soon after 1870 and passed along the flank of the twin mountains now known as Grossmont and Mount Helix. As the "rush" for Julian gold waned over the following years, only essential improvements and repairs were made to the road in order that it could accommodate the most urgent traffic.

The road assumed an increasingly important role after 1889 when the San Diego flume was completed and an abundance of water opened

Mike Dooley, popular pioneer of early Grossmont days, owned a horse ranch located behind the present site of Grossmont High School where he bred prized pacers. In later days, he served as a handyman at the new Grossmont homes.

the door for rapid agricultural development throughout the back country. Production from vineyards, apple orchards, citrus groves, grain fields and other new agricultural endeavors along the route of the original road that paralleled the flume demanded improvements be made to ease the transportation problem. Before long, it had graduated to a highway of sorts and the stage was set to build roads radiating from it — including one up the Grossmont hillside.

After Fletcher and Gross acquired the Grossmont property in 1902, gaining access to its summit would be a significant step in removing the stigma of it being "useless." Thus, Ed Fletcher and his foreman, Mike Dooley, immediately began to inch their way up the steep inclines and across deep ravines, skirting the biggest boulders along the way. Small white rags were tied to branches of the heavy underbrush to direct the Mexican hatchetmen who followed. They cleared the chaparral and other vegetation and rolled aside smaller rocks to provide enough space for teams of mules or horses to form up the foundation for the road.

Several years of manual labor were required to improve the first winding trail up Grossmont's hillside to a point where it could accommodate light vehicular traffic. By 1906, exclusive groups of car owners known as "automobile clubs" spent an occasional Sunday afternoon challenging the risky curves and steep inclines. Their ability to drive to the top of the mountain in relative safety allowed the creation of selected homesites along the way and justified the filing of the first Grossmont Subdivision map that year.

Impact of the "New-Fangled Gasoline Machines"

The year 1906 also stands out as the time when a lethargic attitude toward the new-fangled gasoline machines awakened with a start, ignited by Barney Oldfield's daring feat of driving a car "a mile a minute" around a mile-long dirt track at Lakeside in 59 seconds. His accomplishment, which had been considered impossible, brought everyone's attention to the fact that faster cars would require improved roads in the immediate future.

From that time on, more prestige was connected to owning a fast car than, for example, being elected mayor, breeding a prize bull, or other good things that raised eyebrows. That year of 1906, affluent owners in the county boasted of seventy automobiles including makes such as Stanley Steamers, Maxwells, Nationals, Abbot-Detroits, and air-cooled Franklins. Everywhere, people clamored for more cars and faster cars and before long "road races" blossomed into a popular national pastime. Short distance races sponsored by exclusive automobile clubs soon

graduated into longer distance races sponsored by larger civic groups and even individual cities.

An early race that attracted national attention was a challenging two day affair from Los Angeles to Phoenix via San Diego that required crossing the Colorado River by ferry (or, in one instance, by driving over the tracks on a railroad trestle), fording the Hassayampa, slithering down a 30% grade at Mountain Springs, and somehow manipulating the foot deep sand of the Yuma desert by lowering tire pressure and having a team of dray horses standing by. These and other equally foreboding obstacles were conquered by drivers in cars with splash systems that fouled plugs every ten or fifteen miles and with inadequate cooling systems that required stopping to cool the engines almost as often.

During the next few years, the Los Angeles via San Diego to Phoenix race gained nationwide recognition, prompting the Los Angeles sponsor to demand that San Diego provide more of the prize money to offset some of the benefits from the publicity that it was receiving. But the San Diego city fathers were quite content with the status quo, and their refusal to comply caused the Los Angeles promoters to re-route the race through San Bernadino, Indio, and Yuma, by-passing San Diego entirely.

San Diego responded by organizing its own race to Phoenix and scheduling it to start at the same hour on the same day as the Los Angeles to Phoenix race. A bitter rivalry quickly developed that would continue for several years.

To Phoenix via the Plank Road

The popularity of long-distance road racing fertilized the desire for a system of nationwide highways. As in the case of the railroads, initial plans for a network of super-roads terminated in Los Angeles, leaving San Diego isolated. Local citizens were up in arms, chilled by the thought of having to dog-leg through Los Angeles in order to reach Phoenix and other destinations when a direct route through the San Diego back country was a hundred miles shorter.

An opportunity to change the initial plans came in 1907 when the Arizona legislature, anxious to gain any highway access to the Pacific coast, agreed to pay one third of the cost to build it, whether it terminated in Los Angeles or San Diego or any other port city. The state of California already was committed to pay another third of the cost. The remaining third of the cost would be borne by the city selected as the terminal point on the west coast.

This called for immediate action, and San Diego responded by establishing the "Triple S" Highway Commission, so-called because its three members were named Spreckels, Scripps, and Spaulding. In 1909, they successfully floated a $1,250,000 bond issue to build roads to Point Loma, the "Silver Strand" to Coronado, and last but not least, the first leg of the important highway to Phoenix through the back country.

By 1912, seventy five miles of decomposed granite roads were completed, reaching the Imperial County line at the foot of Mountain Springs grade. The future seemed bright. But suddenly hopes were staggered by the inability of Imperial County residents to fulfill their promised financing of the highway through their county.

When a group of citizens purchased thirty-six carloads of specially cut planks and laid them across seven miles of sand dunes along the Imperial Valley floor, the connecting link between San Diego and Phoenix was completed and the road became officially sanctioned as the California State Highway. The original plank road laid in 1915 was laid vertically, as shown, and lasted for two years before it was replaced by horizontal planks. The horizontal planks, connected together, lasted until 1926 when they were replaced by an asphalt road.

Grossmont "Auto Party" enroute to summit of Grossmont in April of 1909. William Gross and Fred Jackson are shown with the auto at far right.

The auto party upon arriving at Grossmont summit.

Expectedly, Los Angeles newspapers pounced on this misfortune, loudly proclaiming that the "impassable link" in the San Diego-Phoenix route was sufficient reason for the State Highway Commission to award Los Angeles the contract to build the main transcontinental highway through Phoenix and eastward.

But San Diego's sturdy pioneers would not be denied. By private subscription, a group of local citizens purchased thirty-six carloads of specially cut planks and laid out a temporary wooden road on top of the miles of sand across the Imperial Valley desert. This effort resulted in San Diego being awarded the official sanction of the State Highway Commission for the first direct highway to the east.

With a state highway passing directly by Grossmont, a quick and comfortable access to the area by automobile became a reality.

Official Opening of First Road to the Grossmont Summit

Improvements continued on the original road to the Grossmont summit until 1913 when it was officially opened with ceremonies featuring Lillian Russel, the famous light opera star who was best known for her flamboyant life style in company with Diamond Jim Brady. The *La Mesa Scout* applauded her achievement of becoming "the first woman to drive an automobile to the Grossmont summit."

Marie and Hubert Guy proudly driving their 1916 Auburn sports roadster on Pepper Drive along the Grossmont foothills. The big number "7" emblazoned on the hood implied that the machine was among the finest available, fully qualified to compete in any of the popular road races of that day.

A Los Angeles newspaperman challenged Ed Fletcher to a "Pathfinder's Race" from San Diego to Phoenix to start 24 hours before a regularly scheduled race between the two cities. The contestants could select any route they wanted. Since few highways existed, their routes were in large part over uncharted land. Fletcher met the challenge of the predominently desert course by letting the air out of his tires and stationing six-horse teams at strategic locations in the sand hills. He completed the run in 19 1/2 hours while his competitor broke down and never reached his destination. The victory not only made Fletcher the winner of a substantial wager, but also built up interest in San Diego's harbor, solidified San Diego's friendship with Imperial Valley and established the fact that his selected route could be developed into the fastest and most expedient "ocean-to-ocean highway to the east." From Ed Fletcher's book, *Memoirs.*

When Ed Fletcher's selection of "El Granito" as the official name of the road was announced, many of those attending were puzzled, particularly those who understood the Spanish translation meant "kernel" as in corn, or "pimple or blemish," which was an odd or disgusting name for an important road. The strange name was chosen because of Fletcher's plan to continue the road's construction eastward skirting the Grossmont/Mount Helix skyline for approximately four miles where it eventually would intersect with an existing north-south road that dropped into El Cajon Valley. This existing road already was generally identified as El Granito Ave. because it passed directly by the popular El Granito Spring one mile south of El Cajon. In due time, then, Fletcher's El Granito on the western end of Grossmont would join with the El Granito Spring road on the eastern edge of the Grossmont/Mount Helix ridge. It should be noted that the spring, although located on the Grossmont foothills, falls under the geographical jurisdiction of El Cajon.

In the 1915 photograph above, Mme. Schumann-Heink followed by her children Marie, George, and Henry, are shown arriving at the William Gross home after a brisk walk from her home, seen at the upper right. El Granito Avenue, the original road to the Grossmont summit, is shown winding by the Gross house, around the Schumann-Heink home, onward to the Bond home and Grossmont Inn, and up to the summit.

Origin of the Name "El Granito"

Originally, El Granito Mineral Spring and the land around it were part of the El Cajon Rancho purchased by Isaac Lankershim in 1868 that, by pre-arrangement was transferred to Levi Chase for his part in obtaining legal claim to it. Eight years later, Major Chase sold it to a man named Sanford who, in turn, sold it to Dr. Remondino in 1879.

Dr. Remondino arrived in California in poor health in 1873, and soon learned that the life of a frontier doctor differed substantially from the life he enjoyed in the east. He discovered that consumptives preferred to convalesce in the privacy of musty hotel rooms rather than in intimidating, squeaky-clean hospital rooms. And he failed to generate any enthusiasm among the ladies of the Garden Club for his book, *The History of Circumcision*, a best-seller among eastern medical circles.

The doctor's purpose in buying the spring was to bottle and sell the mineral water that was quickly becoming recognized for it's alleged medicinal value and was a popular prescription by doctors who could think of nothing better to offer their patients. He also observed that other doctors were earning more money from sideline business ventures than from their legitimate medical practice. Thus, the purchase of the spring was consistent with the times.

But the claim of magical curative powers and the demand for spring water wouldn't peak for another half-dozen years, and because of sagging sales, Dr. Remondino sold the spring in 1886 to H. T. Christian. During Christian's ownership, the "boom" sent the value of the ranch skyward, then saw it drop during the following "bust" of 1888. For the next years, there were no buyers until 1892 when S. J. Day emerged from the gloom, bought the property, and announced his intentions of undertaking large expenditures for new buildings and other improvements. Unfortunately, Mr. Day's enthusiasm exceeded his financial ability to carry out his grandiose plan and continue to make the house payments. The First National Bank of San Diego took a dim view of his priorities and assumed ownership of the ranch shortly thereafter.

In 1895, the bank transferred title to William Fisher who immediately changed the name of the ranch from the "Christian Place" to the equally unimaginative "Fisher Place." During the first years of this century, Fisher changed the character of the ranch to keep abreast with the changing times when health resorts zoomed in popularity. With mineral waters continuing in vogue, he placed more emphasis on that phase of his operation by creating the El Granito Spring Water Company. He explained that the choice of the name was the result of an incident that happened in 1907 which he described in the 1909 New Year's Day issue of the San Diego Union:

> "I was at work one day in my orange grove when an aged Indian wearily dragged himself along the road and, approaching me, said: 'Me live here ... oh ... long ago. My people, they live on hilltop...drink medicine water, get well. Me show.' Leading back to the spring, he threw himself flat on the ground and drank to his full satisfaction. Then rising, he threw both hands high above his head and with face lifted toward the hilltops, he exclaimed, 'El Granito, El Granito Medicine Water!' Hence the name. From that day, my ranch has borne the name El Granito Rancho and the spring, the El Granito Spring."

The name El Granito caught on. It was a pleasant sounding name, harmonious, and by a stretch of the imagination could be associated with

El Granito Spring, 1915. "A beautiful setting of invigorating fresh air plus the highest quality mineral water from its private spring. By 1909, it was established as a pleasure resort much frequented by health and rest seekers, located among huge boulders and shady foothills one mile south of El Cajon town."

an old Indian legend although the words El Granito are Spanish, not Indian. Further, the old Indian's contention that his people lived on the adjoining hilltops (of Grossmont and Mount Helix) does not conform to accepted anthropological theories. At the time no one bothered to challenge the accuracy of the old Indian's claim.

Ownership of El Granito Spring remained with the Fisher family for almost a half-century although it was leased to various tenants who assumed the responsibility for its management. In 1912, E. M. Richbourg made extensive improvements to the property and promoted the ranch as the El Granito Hotel. The El Cajon News on September 27, 1912, reported:

> "...the grounds will be fitted up with croquet, tennis, archery, a rifle range, and all outdoor games necessary for the enjoyment of the guests, and fresh milk, butter, vegetables grown in the hotel gardens will be on the tables. It is intended also to erect a number of small Italian bungalows among the rocks south of the house in various places. In short, the intent is to make El Granito Hotel one of the most attractive and homelike resorts in the whole country."

But the hey-day of the popular health resort had played out and the ambitious plans for an elaborate hotel never materialized.

In 1915, new lessees arrived and, as usual, the ranch was divided into the mineral water operation and the fruit ranch operation. M. C. Goldsberry took command of the mineral water phase only to discover that advanced medical treatments had removed much of the mystique from mineral water. After four years, he was happy to leave with his shirt, and turned the spring over to Harry Painter and P. C. Langraf who brought along their own innovative plans for the high-grade mineral water of El Granito Spring.

Soda Pop Comes To El Granito Spring

Their idea was a bottling plant for which they ordered $5,000 worth of machinery and equipment. The future was worrisome — oceans of soda water would have to be sold before they would recoup their investment. The market would have to be increased from the small number of people with upset stomachs needing soda water to a larger number of people who simply wanted a refreshing drink.

The answer was brilliant — they added various fruit flavors to the soda water which then became "Soda Pop" and the fledgling company embarked on a long and successful selling campaign. Soda Pop was so-

named because of the noise caused by the uncorking of the first bottles used before the invention of the pressed-on metal caps.

The Demise of El Granito Spring

In 1924, the north/south road passing El Granito Spring was extended southward where it joined Campo Road in Spring Valley and its name was officially designated as Avocado Boulevard. At the same time, Ed Fletcher's original twisty El Granito on the western end of Grossmont was replaced by a more direct road to the summits of Grossmont and Mount Helix. It was named Fuerte Drive in keeping with a trend at that time to name new streets after avocado varieties.

During the next ten years, El Granito's soda pop industry began to fade as nationally distributed Coca Cola gradually took control of the nation's markets. The crash of 1929 and the following depression sealed the doom of El Granito Spring. In 1934, county officials decided the spring was in the path of a proposed new street project and, in the interest of progress, enlarging Avocado Boulevard was considered more important. The *El Cajon Valley* News, on January 19, 1934, explained:

> "Among the improvements to be made with the employment of CWA in this locality is the grading and surfacing in oil of the road leading over the ridge to the south, through the El Granito Spring canyon, which is now known as the Avocado Avenue Extension. They are grading the road near the point where it passes under the flume.
>
> "The plan is to later grade and surface the avenue all the way between Main Street in El Cajon and Campo Highway about two miles south, thus providing a fine thoroughfare through the hills from El Cajon."

Boulders Dictated Road Patterns

The first Grossmont road-builders — like the first home-builders who followed — were confronted with the problem of monstrous boulders invariably blocking their way. The answer was (1) to remove them, or (2) go around them. Removing them was the preferred course of action, but the builders usually discovered that, like icebergs, only the tips of the boulders were visible above the ground.

In cases where a road could not be built between boulders or go around them, other methods were used to dislodge them. The simplest was breaking big ones into little ones which could be carried away. The

second was blasting them to smithereens with dynamite. Still another means of removal was not to remove them at all, but dig a hole alongside then push the boulder into the hole allowing it to become an integral part of the future roadway.

Finally, in some instances, it was possible to move a boulder to the side of the road with wedging timbers. This, however, often resulted in a huge chunk of granite bouncing harmlessly to its final resting place somewhere in the valley below. Construction crews today, of course, discourage this method since a boulder rolling down the mountainside through well-groomed gardens onto a freeway humming with traffic would be an exciting but expensive experience . . .

Freaky Fletcher's Frantic Flight

The fact that the boulder-strewn topography of the Grossmont hillside offered no alternative to narrow, winding roads wasn't discouraging to Ed Fletcher. To the contrary, it fit perfectly into his plan of developing individual homesites on secluded islands of land with exciting views lending each property an atmosphere of exclusiveness. He wanted no box-like plots of land on Grossmont .

But the citizens of nearby La Mesa who assumed that Grossmont was, or soon would be, a part of their town, ridiculed the fact that he dared deviate from the conventional straight or block-like roads. The *La Mesa Scout* emblazoned four huge letters "F F F F" across its front page explaining that they meant "Freaky Fletcher's Frantic Flight" from standard urban square blocks to the unorthodox winding roads he was carving into Grossmont's hillsides.

Young Fletcher refused to be intimidated and continued with his original plan. Later, in his *Memoirs*, he wrote:

> "This paper couldn't see that we were developing a beauty spot— making a dream come true — until later, with caps in hand, the Chamber of Commerce committee waited on me and invited us to join the City of La Mesa, which we never did. Instead, we installed pumping plants and built reservoirs on top of Grossmont and Helix, brought gas and electricity to the property and as I dictate today, April 28, 1950, we have the pleasure of seeing one of San Diego's most beautiful sections and one of the county's best attractions."

Eucalyptus trees are not something new to San Diego county as indicated by this 1889 photograph of Eucalyptus Park (between Spring Valley and La Mesa). But in 1905, the Pinchot scare resulted in many new varieties being imported from Australia and elsewhere to satisify the sudden demand for fast-growing trees.

CHANGING LANDSCAPES

Mr. Gloom and the Eucalyptus Boom - Torrey Pines on Grossmont?

Bringing trees, shrubs, and plants from foreign lands to the local area began in earnest during the 1880s when Flora Kimball and Kate Sessions planted more than 8,000 trees in National City and San Diego. When Kate Sessions moved her nursery from Coronado to downtown San Diego, then to city-owned property in Mission Hills at 6th and Upas Streets in 1892, her lease required her to plant 400 trees a year in lieu of rent — 100 trees in Balboa Park and 300 trees at various school sites.

The trees she planted were propagated from seeds gathered from places such as Australia (eucalyptus and acacia), Spain (cork oak), Asia (camphor), South America (rubber trees and agapanthus) and New England (birch). Although Kate Sessions didn't bring the first eucalyptus trees to San Diego, she imported huge numbers of many new eucalyptus varieties which continue to serve today as a dramatic legacy of her untiring efforts.

When Ed Fletcher set out to beautify his newly-acquired Grossmont property between 1902 and 1906, he called on Kate Sessions for advice concerning the types of trees and shrubs to plant on the mountainside. She sent him hundreds of flats of eucalyptus seedlings along with palms, cuttings of olive trees, and Torrey pines, to name but a few. Her eucalyptus were the first on Grossmont, but not for long as the "eucalyptus boom" followed soon after.

"Mr. Gloom" and the Eucalyptus Boom.

Thanks to a man who never set foot in San Diego, thousands of dense stands of eucalyptus trees were scattered throughout the county soon after the year 1906. He was Gifford Pinchot, appointed by Teddy Roosevelt as United States Forester, a position comparable to today's Secretary of Interior. Characterized by his critics as "Mr. Gloom," Pinchot made a sweeping declaration in 1906 that the enormous logging projects undertaken during the nationwide building boom of the early 1900s "undoubtedly would cause the United States to run out of trees in the immediate future."

When naturalist Teddy Roosevelt added his enthusiastic support to Pinchot's prediction, illusionary environmentalists were ecstatic! But others were overcome with fear. The railroads — the largest and most important American industry — were particularly troubled by the thought of no trees to satisfy their huge demand for railroad ties. Without timbers for construction of new lines and maintenance of existing lines, expansion programs would be crippled and cause the worst conceivable national economic catastrophe.

The Atcheson, Topeka & Santa Fe took matters into their own hands by purchasing the 4,000-acre San Dieguito Rancho where they planted the fastest growing trees they could find — the eucalyptus. During the next three years, thousands of seedlings imported from Australia and New Zealand were set out. The project didn't escape the attention of many local landowners who assumed the railroad wouldn't invest such huge sums of money planting eucalyptus unless there was an assured financial reward when the trees matured. Predictably, many small groves sprung up throughout the county as landowners jumped at the opportunity they were convinced would be a sure-fire success. As an example, the "package deal" of land Madame Schumann-Heink purchased from Ed Fletcher for $20,000 in 1910 included a 40-acre orange grove along the Grossmont foothills, a residential site on the summit, and a "400-acre eucalyptus plantation near Lake Jennings in Lakeside."

But things didn't materialize as planned for the San Dieguito project. At the end of three years, it was evident that the county's ten-inch rainfall was insufficient to stimulate maximum tree growth. An expensive irrigation system was needed. The railroad's brain tank analyzed the situation and determined that the additional expense of piping would boost the cost of each railroad tie to more than a dollar each. And, they added, they knew of no alternative.

While all these high level shenanigans were ulcerating the stomachs of the railroad executives and striking fear into the hearts of consumers who visualized exorbitant railroad fares in the future, nobody bothered to challenge the accuracy of Pinchot's prediction of gloom with those most familiar with the lumber industry. When railroad investigators were sent into the Oregon forests, they were offered a million ties at nine cents each. Or, better yet, if the railroad ordered more than a million ties, the dealers would reduce the price further.

The embarrassing revelation caused the abandonment of the San Dieguito project and the re-assignment of the railroad men who originally thought it was a good idea. The railroad attempted to salvage part of the expense of the San Dieguito project by producing ties from the trees which

Two years after the main Cuymaca Lake dam was built in 1886, thirty-seven miles of tunnels and trestles were completed allowing the flume to reach Grossmont Lake. Later, this was renamed Eucalyptus Reservoir. The water ultimately was diverted to the La Mesa Reservoir which, in 1916, disappeared beneath the lake that formed behind the new Murray Dam. Much later, the site became the practice field for the new San Diego Chargers located south of the former Briar Patch School which is now occupied by Grossmont Hospital Administrative officies. The young eucalyptus trees were planted about 1910 after the government's proclamation of a national lumber shortage. Planting around the lake's perimeter solved the irrigation problem.

had matured. But when it was discovered the wood was too soft to securely hold the spikes of the rails, the Santa Fe quietly slipped away to lick its wounds. Meanwhile, the landowners throughout the county who had planted groves in anticipation of a financial bonanza learned that illusionary dreams sometimes differ from the world of reality. And the thousands of spared eucalyptus trees heaved a sigh of relief and settled back to serve as majestic sentinels beautifying the landscape.

Torrey Pines on Grossmont?

In addition to introducing new varieties of eucalyptus, Kate Sessions also imported different species of rare palms which she planted in various places throughout the city, notably Horton Plaza. Another of her more notable achievements was the importation of thousands of

yellow-blooming acacias she planted in the southeast section of the city which is known today as "Golden Hill." Last but not least, her landscaping triumph for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in Balboa Park brought her world-wide recognition.

Not as well known was her interest in propagating native plants. Torrey Pines, for example, grow naturally only along a two-mile ocean front strip near Del Mar, on the island of Santa Rosa off Santa Barbara, and in a remote seaside section of the Mediterranean. The fact that the little gnarled trees grew only in these tiny restricted areas didn't hinder Kate Sessions from successfully transplanting hundreds of the seedlings on Grossmont's hillsides.

At the time Kate Sessions began experimenting with the Torrey pines, little was known about them. They were originally discovered by two scientists, Dr. C. C. Parry and Dr. L. LeConte, who were working with the Mexican Boundary Commission at San Diego in 1850. LeConte named them "Torrey Pines" in honor of his friend and teacher, Professor John Torrey of Columbia University in New York.

On a return trip to San Diego in 1853, Dr. Parry strongly suggested to officials that a park be created to preserve the beautiful trees with their grotesque silhouettes that challenged the Monterey Pines as a photographer's delight. He explained convincingly that they were unique pine trees growing where they weren't supposed to grow, fifty miles from their nearest cone-bearing conifer cousins of the back country. As a result, the first Torrey Pines Park was formed by the Common Council.

But many of the trees also grew on private land adjacent to the Park land that provided Kate Sessions with legitimate cuttings. These were the rooted saplings brought to Grossmont before 1908 when Ellen Browning Scripps created a second Torry Pines Park that included all the trees on or off public land, and was protected by an ordinance prohibiting removal of either seedlings or cuttings. The little Torrey Pines already transplanted to Grossmont thrived for years despite a sharp contrast in their environment. Grossmont's saplings grew into more erect, stereotyped trees than those at Del Mar which were subject to the constant buffeting by ocean breezes and they grew much higher, sometimes exceeding 100 feet. Many still remain.

"COLONY FOR ARTISTS"

First Land Sales - Madame Schumann-Heink's Purchase - Carrie Jacobs Bond's Purchase - Havrah Hubbard's Purchase - Theresa Carreno's Purchase - Johanna Gadski's Purchase - More Famous Buyers.

After official subdivisions were recorded in 1906, 1908, and 1910, individual land parcels became available to the curious onlookers who had watched Grossmont's development with interest from its beginning in 1902. At last, they were able to back up their compliments with cash purchases as the developers placed more emphasis on sales and promotion than on physical land improvements.

Despite the fact that first impressions of Grossmont were clearly positive, often expressed in almost revered tones, there was no frantic rush to buy homesites. Compliments were encouraging and indicated that, sooner or later, the investment gamble and years of preparation would prove to be time and money well spent. But meanwhile, there was the persistent reminder that the area was geographically isolated and far away from the country's primary business centers and commercial markets. And, from a local viewpoint, commuting to San Diego would remain a hardship until substantial improvements were made to the existing means of transportation.

First Land Sales

Prior to recording Grossmont Park subdivision #2 in 1908, only the small redwood cottage started by William Gross on a site along El Granito Avenue was in the planning stage or under construction. Then, during the Fall of 1909, matters took an unexpected and exciting turn when three well-known artists in the musical world, expressed interest in owning Grossmont property. One was Carrie Jacobs Bond, famous composer and lyricist. The second was Havrah Hubbard, considered the nation's foremost music critic. And lastly, was Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, the world's greatest operatic contralto. Although the three were old acquaintances, their interest in Grossmont land developed independently.

Madame Schumann-Heink's Purchase

In January of 1910, Mme. Schumann-Heink appeared in concert at San Diego's Garrick Theater. In the audience was William Gross who

The *El Cajon News* reported, " . . . three weeks ago, these real enthusiasts brought the noted lady to the top of Grossmont to view the landscape o'er." The lady was Madame Schumann-Heink who was so impressed that she immediately took an option to buy a $20,000 land parcel offered to her by Ed Fletcher and William Gross.

Group above, disembarked, overlooking El Cajon Valley from Cape Horn.

knew the diva well from joint experiences during his own illustrious theatrical career. After her performance when he went backstage to offer customary congratulations and renew their old friendship, he noted with interest that Mme. Schumann-Heink expressed a desire to acquire some secluded California property on which she could build a sort of retreat from her strenuous concert tour.

Gross revealed the details of their conversation in an article in the *El Cajon Valley News*:

> "She was interested in owning an orange grove and a eucalyptus plantation. I told her I thought we could show her land near San Diego that would prove interesting to her and arranged to have Colonel Fletcher take her out to Grossmont Park and Villa Caro Ranch. She was delighted with everything and said she considered the view from Grossmont one of the finest in the world. The panorama of ocean, mountain, and valley views strongly appealed to her love of nature.
>
> "She took a great fancy to our orange orchard and then and there asked Colonel Fletcher to give her an option on this property as well as several hundred acres of eucalyptus land (in Lakeside) and a summit homesite in Grossmont."

In a subsequent interview with the San Diego Union, Mme. Schumann-Heink repeated her intention of locating in the West. The

Long before her Grossmont home was completed, Madame Schumann-Heink spent many enjoyable hours planting young trees and shrubs for her orchard and garden.

interview was repeated in all other newspapers in California and as a result "she received more than 1,000 offers from all over the state of homesites, ranches, etc., in every locality from the Mexican border to the Oregon line, even some offering the property as a gift, believing it would be a great inducement to have the famous singer locate in their particular locality."

On February 3, 1910, a deal was arranged. Mme. Schumann-Heink exercised her option to buy the land in spite of more generous offers of properties in other parts of the state. Gross said, "the love of the famous lady for San Diego and our own back country proved too strong a magnet for her to change her mind."

On February 19, 1910, the *El Cajon Valley News* reported the details of the transaction:

> "At a cost of $20,000, Mme. Schumann-Heink secured a 15-acre lemon orchard in Villa Caro, a residence lot in Grossmont Park, and about 400 acres of land over the hills to the east of El Cajon Valley near the Lakeview flume trestle and close to Sheriff Jenning's farm. This last property is to be planted in eucalyptus.
>
> "She has selected a delightful spot for a bungalow on Grossmont near the orange grove she just purchased and she will have plans drawn up for the house shortly."

Carrie Jacobs Bond at home in 1915.

Carrie Jacobs Bond's Purchase

About the same time, a second site on Grossmont Park was purchased by Carrie Jacobs Bond, a composer, lyricist, and publisher of many musical ballads including *The End of a Perfect Day, Just A'Wearying for You* , and *I Love You Truly* . After the accidental death of her second husband, she assumed all the management responsibilities of their publishing house in Los Angeles and also retained her home in nearby Hollywood. She planned to utilize the cottage she would build on Grossmont as a week-end retreat where she could escape the stressful pressures of city life. Appropriately, she selected the name "Nest-O-Rest" for her future home in anticipation of the restful surroundings which would allow her to work in a peaceful environment. The one-acre summit site she purchased in March of 1910 was specially priced by Ed Fletcher at $850, then reduced to $550 "to hurry the deal along."

Havrah Hubbard's Purchase

In April of 1910, another nationally prominent musical figure expressed interest in owning Grossmont property. Havrah Hubbard was an accomplished vocalist and pianist and, after serving as musical correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, came to work as music critic for the San Diego Union. As was the case with Carrie Jacobs Bond, he too drove a hard bargain which caused Ed Fletcher to reluctantly reduce his price to $500 which he noted in personal correspondence was "fifty dollars less than Carrie paid!"

Theresa Carreno's Purchase

Also in the Spring of 1910, Madame Theresa Carreno joined the rapidly growing company of artists and theatrical celebrities who purchased homesites on Grossmont with the idea of permanently residing there in the future. Colonel Fletcher confirmed Madame Carreno's purchase of the $25,000 package deal in the *San Diego Union*:

> "The property included in the sale consists of nearly nine acres of lemon orchard, five acres of tangerines and oranges, and between fifteen and twenty acres of undeveloped land. The property is located on the Villa Caro Ranch owned by Mr. Gross and myself. It joins the fourteen acre orange grove purchased by Mme. Schumann-Heink from us some time ago.
>
> "In addition to the ranch property, Mme. Carreno has also purchased one of the most beautiful building sites on Grossmont overlooking her property in El Cajon Valley.

The building site she has selected is on the hill near Cape Horn and joins Mme. Schumann-Heink's property.

"Mme. Carreno already has given orders to have her two-acre site on Grossmont beautified by the construction of driveways and walks and the planting of numerous shrubs and plants and trees. Plans will be made at once for her bungalow which will contain eleven or twelve rooms and I hope that she will see her way clear to have it erected immediately. That is her intention at the present time."

Unfortunately, Madame Carreno's death in 1917 from myasthenia gravis at the age of 64 occurred before she could fulfill her dream of retiring to Grossmont and her bungalow was never built.

Johanna Gadski's Purchase

By 1912, more celebrities expressed interest in joining the colony. On September 23, the San Diego Union reported the purchase of a homesite by Madame Johanna Gadski, a German soprano who starred with the Metropolitan Opera Company:

Cape Horn was the name that Theresa Carreno assigned to her 2-acre sub-summit Grossmont property she purchased from Ed Fletcher in 1910. The beautiful viewsite overlooking El Cajon Valley was located at the present intersection of Sunset and El Granito Avenues, adjacent to the land parcels purchased by Mme. Schumann-Heink and Johanna Gadski that same year. Zelda Heink Vernier is shown at left of the unidentified person holding the sign; Thelma Jones Todd is standing at the right.

"By the purchase of nearly two acres of ground on scenic Grossmont from Ed Flecther and William Gross last week, Mme. Johanna Gadski Tauscher, who sang at the Spreckels Theater Thursday night, became a member of the unique suburb. The mountain, on the San Diego & Southeastern Railway about twelve miles east of San Diego and on the southwesten edge of El Cajon Valley is becoming the center of a musical and literary colony that is considered unique in the United States.

"Three of the best sites on Grossmont are now owned by Madame Gadski, the great Wagnerian dramatic soprano, Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, the greatest living contralto, and Madame Theresa Carreno, the greatest woman pianist in the world."

By the summer of 1910, a characteristic trend was developing as new Grossmont landowners or prospective buyers included the world's foremost entertainers in the musical and literary fields. A nucleus had

On the blustery day of December 4, 1913, what appears to be an innocent group gathered to enjoy the striking panoramic view of El Cajon Valley is, in fact, a most important group pertaining to the development of Grossmont and the creation of its "Colony for Artists." Seated at the far left was Ed Fletcher with Johanna Gadski, renowned soprano. Standing at the right was Theresa Carreno, famous pianist, with her husband, Signor Tagliastia, and an unidentified man. The property they are inspecting was named Cape Horn, located directly across the homesite of Madame Schumann-Heink. Each of the two women seen above purchased adjacent lots, but their untimely deaths prevented them from completing their planned Grossmont homes.

Theresa Carreno, born in Venezuela, was acknowledged to be the greatest pianist of her day. She led a stormy life, including four marriages and several children who died in infancy. "A strong, flashy, virtuoso performer, she delighted audiences with her flair and tempestuous style." Three years after buying a homesite adjacent to the property of Mme. Schumann-Heink, she died of a mysterious ailment in 1917 before she had the opportunity to build her home.

Carreno Point, also known as Cape Horn, as seen from below.

Madame Johanna Gadski was killed in an automobile accident in South Africa before she could begin construction of her Grossmont home.

formed for the creation of an exclusive residential retreat for celebrities in the world of performing arts — for famous people seeking a private, secluded home where they could escape the rigors of strenuous travel schedules. The "Colony for Artists" concept fell into place quite naturally.

More Famous Buyers

With the official opening of Grossmont's first road to the summit in 1913, "America's Riviera" became increasingly popular, attracting more and more luminaries into the fold. By 1915, the original group had several new neighbors who were building or planning to build homes on the Grossmont hillside.

During his early years, Owen Wister broke away from a strict family environment and headed West to combat a serious illness. He became enraptured with the challenges of the wide open spaces which ultimately formulated the basis for his successful western novels. Best known of these was *The Virginian,* written in 1904. Through his acquaintance with Ed Fletcher, Wister purchased a Grossmont homesite located at 9499 El Granito Avenue along with joining Fletcher as co-owner of several thousand acres of other local properties. Due to the unexpected

death of his wife, Wister's dream of retiring at Grossmont was shattered and he never permanently moved into his home which he ordered sold in 1915.

Several other prominent artists in the musical and literary fields became members of Grossmont's Colony for Artists, but their local activities are vague and the location of their properties requires additional investigation. One was Charles William Clark, an accomplished baritone and originally a successful voice teacher in Chicago. Kathleen Crawford in her article entitled "God's Garden" in the *San Diego Historical Society Journal* noted that "one small fact (regarding Clark) came to light in the course of research. Madame Schumann-Heink had a picture of Clark hung in her home . . . (indicating) she felt he had contributed an enormous amount to American music."

Also concealed in history is the location of property purchased by Edmund Schneider, famous pianist.

John Vance Cheney, highly regarded poet, was still another whose activities at Grossmont are hidden by the passage of time. But his sentimental attachment to Grossmont is clearly expressed by a poem he wrote to Ed Fletcher entitled "At Grossmont."

Another arrival at Grossmont during the early years was a mysterious lady named Elizabeth Robinson who allegedly moved West to escape the stern restrictions placed on her by her wealthy Boston parents. Mrs. Robinson, seldom seen, built a rambling redwood home on the eastern end of El Granito Avenue which featured a huge ballroom and massive aviary. She lived as a recluse until her death in the 1930s.

Charles Wakefield Cadman frequently is included as an original member of the Colony for Artists although he arrived a decade later and settled on Mount Helix rather than Grossmont. Despite this minor technicality, he deserves to be included in the group of famous entertainers who found a restful retreat on the local mountainsides. Cadman became infatuated with music of the American Indian and his operatic compositions and individual songs were centered around Indian themes. The best known of these was his *Land of Sky Blue Waters.* After visiting with Fred Hansen at his new home atop Mount Helix in 1929, Cadman became convinced that "Mount Helix was the only place in the world to make one forget Hollywood." As a result, he closed his Hollywood home and soon afterward began construction of a house in Hansen's Calavo Gardens.

GROSSMONT'S FIRST HOUSES

The William Gross House - Mme. Schumann-Heink's "Casa Ernestina" - Havrah Hubbard's "Ledgehome" - Carrie Jacobs Bond's "Nest-O-Rest" - Ed Fletcher's "Grossmont Inn" - The Owen Wister House - A "Swiss Chalet" on Grossmont

Each homesite of the 1906 and 1908 Grossmont Park Subdivisions was sold with the express, or at least implied, stipulation that the buyer build his home as soon as possible. Developers Ed Fletcher and William Gross realized that land bought exclusively for speculation would remain empty until resold, and empty land wouldn't convey the desired image of a rapidly developing community. Therefore on most lots sold between 1910 and 1914, homes were under construction, completed, or in the planning stage.

The first house to be started belonged to William Gross who laid a foundation for a small cottage alongside the original trail up the mountainside about 1906. Predictably, difficulty in moving available supplies to the site caused construction to proceed at a snail's pace. Not until 1912 were materials able to be transported with relative ease.

Generally regarded to be the first home completed on Grossmont was the estate of Madame Schumann-Heink which was officially finished on August 15th, 1912. She named it "Casa Ernestina" and it became the launching pad for future homes in Grossmont's "Colony for Artists." At almost the same time, Carrie Jacobs Bond's home, "Nest-O-Rest" was completed as was Havrah Hubbard's "Ledgehome." And the finishing touches were being added to William Gross' redwood home.

Completion of other important homes quickly fell into place with the most notable addition being Ed Fletcher's rambling showcase called the "Grossmont Inn," completed in 1913.

Owen Wister, famous novelist and author of *The Virginian*, built another of the first houses, but never lived there permanently. As noted, Johanna Gadski, famous soprano, was another prominent artist who purchased one of Grossmont's first homesites but was accidentally killed before she could begin construction. And Teresa Carreno, considered the world's greatest pianist, also came to an untimely death before she could

Entry to William Gross home off El Granito in 1914. Note the deck extending from the front porch.

Arbor off William Gross house. 1914.

carry out her plans to build her Grossmont home across the street from the Schumann-Heink home and adjacent to Johanna Gadski's homesite.

The William Gross House

Two important events happened in 1906, four years after William Gross and Ed Fletcher acquired the Hervey Parke ranches and began hacking a trail up the chaparral-covered mountainside on the southern edge of the property. First, the completion of the basic improvements qualified the area, originally named Mount Gross, for filing as a subdivision with the county recorder in order that deeds could be issued for individual land parcels. The name of Mount Gross for the subdivision, however, lacked a catching appeal such as neighboring Sweetwater and Spring Valley, and thus was changed to Grossmont. The second event of some significance was the start of construction by William Gross of the first house on one of the first subdivided lots on the Grossmont mountainside.

Construction was slow, dependent upon completion of road improvements, planting schedules, lot surveys, and bringing utilities to the area. Finally, the small redwood structure was completed in 1913, seven years after the first plans were laid.

In 1921, the house was sold to Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink who, in turn, gave it to her son, Henry.

Subsequent owners included Dr. Andrew Smith and his wife, Mary, who spent twenty-five hears as owners of the home. Over the years, they completed improvements and additions which emphasized rather than interrupted the original charm and character of the house. First, the tiny kitchen, typical of many early "cottages," was enlarged. Then a dining room was built. All work was accomplished without disturbing the original fine-grained redwood paneling, the original fixtures, and the thick beveled glass in the living area. The original flavor was retained.

The secluded homesite at 9633 El Granito was acquired by Tom and Marian Warburton in 1975, then sold to Mr. and Mrs. Mick Mead two years later.

The Schumann-Heink Home

When an architect's client is among the world's most famous celebrities whose name appeared constantly in magazines and newspapers, it would be a reasonable assumption that he wouldn't misspell her

Architect Del Harris forgot to provide an entry to the servants' downstairs living quarters forcing them to enter and exit through the upstairs living room.

The problem was corrected in 1914 with the construction of an access door beneath the little semi-circular window.

name on the plans for her home. But Mr. Harris did. The error in the caption of the plans drew smiles as did the description of the eighteen-room, two-story structure as a "cottage." The trivial mistakes didn't warrant challenging the architect's bill, but they did suggest other discrepancies possibly existed. Indeed, several quickly surfaced.

The first was the omission of an access door leading in or out of the downstairs area which served as the servants' quarters. The only way to leave from the lower part of the home was to walk upstairs and pass through the living room and veranda to the outside. Having a procession of domestics wandering in and out was a bit disconcerting to anyone entertaining guests or enjoying an evening of blissful solitude in the living room. The architectural oversight was quickly corrected after the home was occupied by installing a downstairs entryway.

Another confusing feature was a tall stone chimney which rose conspicuously above the kitchen entrance to the house. Since there was no reason for the architects to expect natural gas and electricity to reach the summit of Grossmont for many years to come, they included a chimney-vented area for a wood burning stove, a standard fixture for most back-country homes of that era. But they failed to recognize the

A summer sunset illuminates the Schumann-Heink home in 1913.

The natural granite rock chimney above the kitchen area was designed to accomodate a wood burning stove. But the arrival of gas and electricity to the top of Grossmont in 1912 made the chimney obsolete before construction of the house was complete.

The original stone columns with the sturdy overhead beams were placed wide enough apart to allow only horse-drawn carriages or narrow bodied cars to pass. When tourist vehicles with bulbous bodies arrived in the 'teens the attractive *porte cochere* had to be removed. It has never been rebuilt.

powerful influence of developer Ed Fletcher whose efforts brought utility service to the Schumann-Heink home in 1912, the same time utilities were made available to the citizens of El Cajon. Thus, the kitchen chimney became obsolete a few months before the house was officially completed.

Later, the chimney was used to vent a commode in a small toilet room built in a corner of the kitchen providing a rather unwelcome reception for Santa Claus, if there is a Santa Claus.

The original plans for the Schumann-Heink home called for six massive square pillars of natural granite rock topped with several large redwood open-beams forming an impressive port-cochere at the main entry. Again, the architect's apparent unawareness of progress became painfully obvious. Just as he disregarded the possibility of gas or electric stoves, so did he ignore the rapid development of fat-bodied automobiles by locating the stone columns so close together that only carriages and pony carts could pass through comfortably. As more and more automobiles arrived at the Schumann-Heink home and their sizes increased, maneuvering lumbering vehicles through the columns became such a challenging adventure that, in 1916, it was necessary to remove the pillars and the home was deprived of one of its most attractive original features.

Not all problems could be blamed on the architect. The best of plans couldn't foresee the possibility of coyotes peering into the downstairs windows scattering the servants in panic or, at least, disturbing their nocturnal overtures. By 1915, their continuing complaints resulted in the installation of elaborate hinged iron grillwork which could be opened and locked with a key on each ground floor window.

As further protection from marauding varmints, a thick, five-foot high wall was built around the homesite providing added insurance that wild animals would be kept outside and domestic animals would be kept inside. The wall, enclosing more than an acre, was built without gates other than upper and lower driveway entrances. Gates would have been superfluous — there was no reason to wander outside, and there was nothing outside that was welcome inside.

During the teens and early twenties, changing circumstances called for corresponding changes in the Schumann-Heink home. Her untiring efforts during World War I to provide entertainment for servicemen in camps and hospitals and her extensive personal promotion of War Bonds kept her constantly in the public eye. Suddenly, along with being idolized by music lovers and patrons of the arts, she became a beloved personal figure in every American household.

As her fame spread, business and social gatherings became more frequent whenever she was at home in Grossmont. Inviting guests to remain overnight rather than endure the 12-mile trip back to San Diego's railroad depot or a hotel was an appropriate and gracious gesture. This, however, necessitated new and larger sleeping quarters and other alterations, most of which were completed between 1916 and 1922.

Among the more important improvements were enclosing the open-porch on the front (north side) of the house, and secondly, converting the original tiny garage into a comfortabl five-room apartment. The front porch, with its large bay window capturing an impressive view of El Cajon Valley and the back country mountains, immediately became the "conversation room" — a focal point where people gathered — while the converted garage became the private quarters for the Schumann-Heink chauffeur and later to provide living accomodations for a long parade of domestic servants.

With these additions and improvements, the adolescent period of the Schumann-Heink home came to a close although other "unexpected events" were destined to appear during the following years.

View from Grossmont summit looking northward down the mountainside into El Cajon Valley. Structure at the right with overhead porte-cochere is the Grossmont Inn; square building at the center, foreground, was built and occupied by the Bennett family. The Schumann-Heink home is seen at the left center.

Havrah Hubbard's Ledgehome

At the age of forty-one, Havrah Hubbard arrived in San Diego while searching for a place to live in the West. His first order of business was to contact an old acquaintance, William Gross. After a brief discussion concerning their common interest in the entertainment field, talk turned to Gross's retirement to San Diego's back country. Hubbard expressed interest in receiving more information about the possibility of his investing in local property.

The next day, Hubbard and Gross were joined by Ed Fletcher and the three men toured the back country. Hubbard was particularly impressed with Grossmont and negotiations to buy a homesite began immediately. As noted, he drove a hard bargain, forcing Fletcher to reduce his asking price to $500 and, as a further inducement, "to furnish a man to clear the lot for $10, and who will work for nine hours a day for two dollars planting shrubs and trees, etc. He will keep all shrubs and plants watered for $1 a month." The offer was too good to refuse, and the deed was recorded in 1911.

Havrah Hubbard resided in the house for many years, even building a small stage for private performances. From 1928-1932 he was music critic for the San Diego Union and gave lectures on opera and the arts. Havrah Hubbard died in 1951 at the age of eighty-three.

Havrah Hubbard's home was perched atop a huge granite boulder.

The site of Havrah Hubbard's home offered an unsurpassed view. Schumann-Heink home is seen in the background.

Carrie Jacobs Bond's "Nest-O-Rest"

The homes of Carrie Jacobs Bond and Ernestine Schumann-Heink were completed in the late summer of 1912 and provided real momentum for the ultimate success of the Grossmont Park developments as exclusive residential areas. And they established the promotional theme for the community as a "Colony for Artists" since both women were internationally famous for their musical and/or literary achievements — Madame Schumann-Heink as an operatic virtuoso and Carrie Jacobs Bond as the composer of beautiful classical ballads.

Strange as it seems, their individual decisions to build a home on Grossmont were independent of each other even though both were close friends with similar interests. Each had residences elsewhere and planned to use their new Grossmont estates as a "cottages" for weekend or other occasional visits. That their chosen sites were located less than a mile apart and their houses were completed less than a month apart was strictly a matter of coincidence — perhaps quietly orchestrated by Ed Fletcher and Bill Gross.

During this period in the early 'teens, Carrie Jacobs Bond's fame was spreading rapidly and more and more friends and patrons anxiously awaited an opportunity to visit her new Grossmont home. Their clamor

A COTTAGE IN GOD'S GARDEN

There's a cottage in God's Garden
Where my tired feet may rest,
And weary though my soul may be,
My spirit there is blessed.

The wild birds chant their carols
And the wildflowers bloom galore
Out in God's lovely garden . . .
How could I ask for more?

There's a cottage in God's Garden,
Upon a mountain high,
Away from strife and turmoil
And all life's din and cry.

Away from care and sorrow,
From all life's tears and woe.
A cottage in God's Garden
Where I am free to go.

— Carrie Jacobs Bond

was not discouraged by Carrie who enjoyed giving recitals of her compositions to visitors. But the original cottage was not meant to be pretentious; rather, it was intended as a back country retreat neatly tucked away among imposing boulder formations and large trees. It consisted of three rooms built with California redwood and highlighted by a picturesque fireplace. Immediate additions were necessary to accomodate the large numbers who wanted to visit, The first was a 40-foot by 40-foot living room paneled in redwood including another fireplace — a perfect setting for private performances.

After Carrie Jacobs Bond's death in 1946 at the age of 84, the home passed to her granddaughter, Mrs. Cecil Madden and her husband. The next owners were Dr. and Mrs. Robert DeRiemer who further enlarged the home with the addition of a master bedroom, library, and dining room along with making several decorative improvements.

The San Diego Union described the home as "one of the most exciting with timeless quality. Although contemporary art pieces give a look of today to the home, it has a mellow feeling conveyed through the DeReimer's collection of antique furniture and antique accessories."

Ed Fletcher's Grossmont Inn was the showplace for prospective buyers of Grossmont property as well as an exquisite place for afternoon tea or quite dinner.

Ed Fletcher's "Grossmont Inn"

After Ed Fletcher aquired Hervey Parke's ranch property in 1902, he moved his family into the elaborate ranchhouse known as "Villa Caro" where they lived for the next three years. After 1910, when the road up the mountainside was broadened and leveled sufficiently to allow normal transporting of materials, construction of Fletcher's "Grossmont Inn" near the summit of Grossmont began in earnest.

The impressive structure was completed in 1913, about six months after the Schumann-Heink and Carrie Jacobs Bond homes were finished. William Gross' home, started about 1906, also was finished at this time, followed closely by Havrah Hubbard's house. With these five homes completed, Grossmont's development was underway.

The Fletcher home became the "showplace" of Grossmont, and after El Granito Avenue was ceremoniously opened officially in 1913 to allow automobile traffic to the summit, visitors began arriving in greater numbers. Before the puffing automobiles challenged the narrow curves, Dan McFall and his "surrey with the fringe on top" would meet visitors from San Diego at the train depot and drive them to the summit, stopping enroute at the Grossmont Inn. There they were greeted by white-gloved servants at the porte cochere and ushered to the overhead porch where they could enjoy the spectacular view and sip a cup of tea. From this

The main road to the Grossmont summit passed under the handsome porte cochere of the Grossmont Inn.

At the Grossmont Station, one could expect to meet Dan McFall with his "surrey with the fringe on top" waiting for the arrival of the train from San Diego hopefully bringing two or three passengers headed up the hillside for a short period of relaxation at the Grossmont Inn.

San Diego Union

The year 1913 was an important one for Fletcher and Grossmont for it marked not only the completion of the first road to the summit but it was also the year that the Grossmont Inn was built, according to the memoirs.

"San Diegans used to come out on the train to Grossmont station which was located on what is now Water street just northwest of Murray drive and Interstate 8 and near Grossmont High School. The people would be met at the station by a horse-drawn carriage. They'd put on linen dusters and ride up the hill to the Inn to have tea and spend the day, returning later on the train to San Diego," the junior Fletcher said. "It made a pleasant day."

Seated alongside Dan McFall is his granddaughter, Thelma Jones (Todd) who, with Marie Schumann, frequently met the surrey upon returning by train from classes at San Diego's Russ High School.

veranda, they moved into a large dining area where more refreshments were served, hence to an adjoining sitting room for a period of relaxed conversation, much of which undoubtedly pertained to the virtues of Grossmont. The Grossmont Inn, continued to serve as a showplace during the following years for visitors who continued to arrive in increasing numbers.

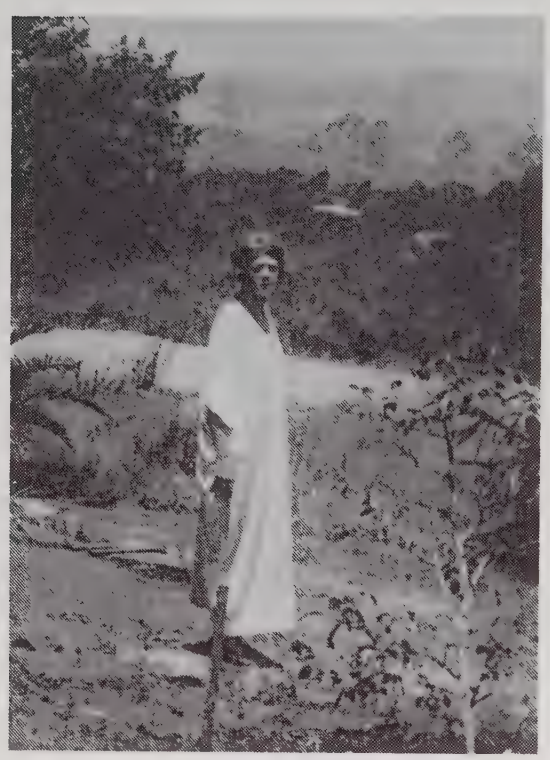
Grace's Garret

As Grossmont's "Colony for Artists" attracted more and more leading performers in the music and literary fields, its reputation spread to the various cultural centers of America and the rest of the world as well. The intrigue of a small mountain nestled in a most remote section of the country where famous entertainers could enjoy privacy and seclusion became "the talk of the town" wherever famous artists gathered. Predictably, entertainers in New York City were bubbling over with enthusiasm about this ideal retreat from everyday stresses. The constant conversations about Grossmont on the faraway opposite side of the continent came to the attention of Grace Godwin-Sperry, owner of the popular "Grace's Garret" in New York's Greenwich Village that served as an exclusive gathering place for such entertainment luminaries as Harry Lauder, Enrico Caruso, Eugene Fields, Lillian Russell and many other wealthy patrons of the arts.

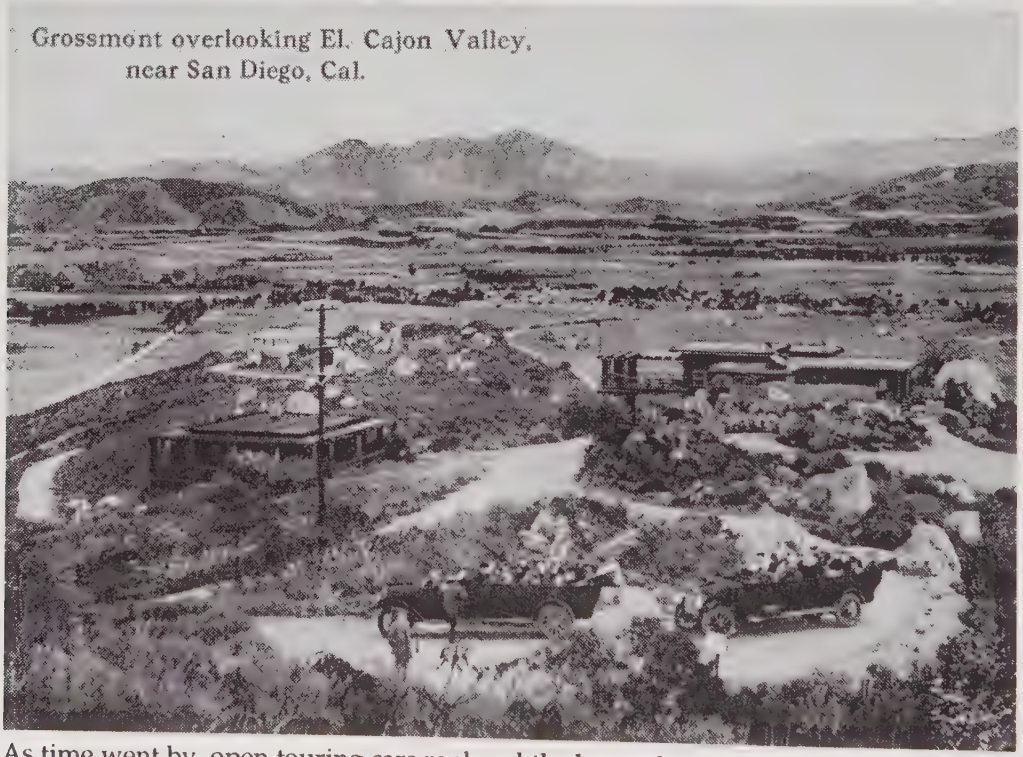
The incessant expounding of the virtues of the Colony for Artists ultimately convinced Grace Godwin-Sperry to head for California and open a western version of New York's Grace's Garret. What place would be more appropriate for her new venture than Ed Fletcher's rambling redwood Inn right in the heart of Grossmont?

Thus, the Grossmont Inn was revitalized and successfully operated by Grace Godwin-Sperry and advertised as "A Place for Interesting and Interested People."

As the 'teen years came to a close, clouds of uncertainty hovered over the Godwin-Sperry's future plans. Their first problem was husband Bill's poor health caused by his being gassed in World War I. Hoping that a higher alitiude would enhance his chances for recovery, the couple had invested heavily in a ranch near Julian. But this failed to materialize. The second problem was brought on by their unending generosity resulting in loans that never were repaid. In one case, they were required to accept the Spring Valley Store as a loan repayment, but the store proved to be an unprofitable venture placing an additional burden on their already weakned financial condition and ultimately forcing them to give up the Grossmont Inn operation.

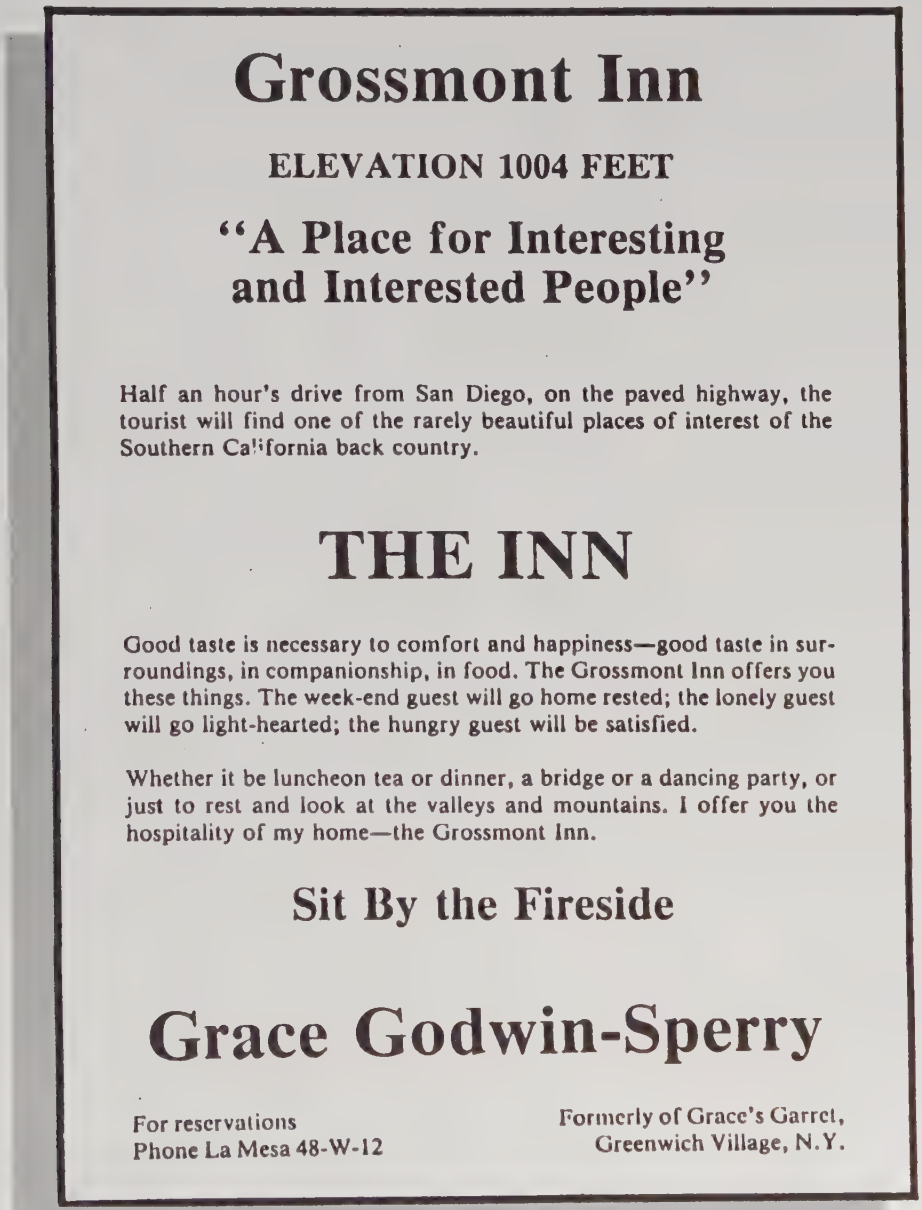


Grace Goodwin-Sperry owned Grace's Garret in Greenwhich Village, New York, where many luminaries of the entertainment world gathered. After hearing her patrons constantly expound the virtues of Grossmont and its "Colony for Artists," she decided to move her entire operation to Grossmont where several of her more important guests already owned homes.



As time went by, open touring cars replaced the horse-drawn tally-ho as the primary means of transportation up the mountain to the Inn. Road directions on the back of an early photograph explained that the "up" road went around the Schumann-Heink home, then curved back under the extended porch of the Inn (right center) and continued about 100 yards past the Hubbard house where one branch went to Carrie Jacobs Bond's home and the right fork became the "down" road.

Sometime after the departure of Grace-Godwin Sperry and her husband, the Grossmont Inn was occupied by Fred Hansen and his family while his elaborate new home was being built on top of Mount Helix. Just before Christmas of 1924, Ed Fletcher,Jr., and his bride of six months moved into the Inn and lived there until 1933 when he sold the property to Mrs. Jerome Allen. According to an article in the San Diego Union, Mrs. Allen's husband, Navy Captain Jerome Allen, was on overseas assignment in the Orient and knew nothing about the new home until happily surprised upon his return to San Diego.



Grossmont Inn

ELEVATION 1004 FEET

"A Place for Interesting and Interested People"

Half an hour's drive from San Diego, on the paved highway, the tourist will find one of the rarely beautiful places of interest of the Southern California back country.

THE INN

Good taste is necessary to comfort and happiness—good taste in surroundings, in companionship, in food. The Grossmont Inn offers you these things. The week-end guest will go home rested; the lonely guest will go light-hearted; the hungry guest will be satisfied.

Whether it be luncheon tea or dinner, a bridge or a dancing party, or just to rest and look at the valleys and mountains. I offer you the hospitality of my home—the Grossmont Inn.

Sit By the Fireside

Grace Godwin-Sperry

For reservations
Phone La Mesa 48-W-12

Formerly of Grace's Garret,
Greenwich Village, N.Y.

Advertisement appearing in the *La Mesa Scout*

The Owen Wister House

The romantic thought that Owen Wister wrote his famous western novel, *The Virginian*, while living at Grossmont unfortunately is untrue; the classic story was composed a decade earlier at Jackson Hole, Wyoming. In fact, Owen Wister never lived in the rambling redwood "Owen Wister House" he built on El Granito Avenue in 1915.

Wister's introduction to Grossmont's Colony for Artists came at the National Moose Convention held in San Diego in 1914. The gathering attracted the country's most prominent outdoor sportsmen including Wister and his former roommate at Harvard, ex-President Teddy Roosevelt. Ed Fletcher had met Roosevelt earlier, and the Moose meeting provided them the opportunity to renew their acquaintance. Fletcher invited him to visit his Grossmont home and other Fletcher-owned properties, and Owen Wister joined the excursion into the back country. Wister was impressed by the area and agreed it was not only an ideal spot for his retirement years, but also offered an excellent investment potential. After several meetings, Fletcher and Wister decided to buy 3,500 acres of land in El Cajon valley as a joint venture, and Wister instructed Fletcher to build him a home on Grossmont and a cottage in Del Mar.

Before the time for his retirement and move to his Grossmont home that Owen Wister had instructed Ed Fletcher to build, his wife died unexpectedly. Disillusioned, Wister disposed of all his properties in the local area.

Before it was time to retire and move to Grossmont, Wister's wife died unexpectedly. Disillusioned, he lost interest in his local properties and told Fletcher to dispose of all his holdings.

Although Grossmont was never his permanent residence, Wister enjoyed many brief visits there over the years which gave his home an enduring identity as the "Owen Wister House." Further evidence of his influence is found by the names of nearby streets such as Wister Drive, Virginian Lane, and Mollywoods Avenue, the latter named for the school teacher in Wister's *Virginian*.

Owen Wister died in 1938 at the age of seventy-eight.

About 1930, mining engineer Waldo Clark and his wife Georgia acquired the home where they lived for the next twenty years. In 1945, Herman and Beatrice Snodgrass bought the attractive home.

John Vance Cheney House

Another charter member of the Colony for Artists was John Vance Cheney who built a 1,400 square foot, all-redwood house "down the road from the Owen Wister home."

Cheney practiced law in New York until the late 1870s when he turned his attention to literary work. By the turn of the century, he was recognized as the country's leading poet and librarian as well as the author of several highly successful books including *The Old Doctor* (1881) and *Out of the Silence* (1897).

He died at Grossmont on May 1, 1922, at the age of seventy-four.

The home, located at 9410 Sierra Vista, was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Larry Kelly in 1961.

Kate Sessions' Rose Garden

As mentioned, not all famous people who lived on Grossmont during its formative years were in the entertainment field. Intermingled with the literary and musical giants were such names as Sieberling (tires), Yawkey (Boston Red Sox), Waterman (California governor), Hansen (Cyclone Fence) and, of course, Hervey Parke and George Davis (Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Company). And last but not least was Kate Sessions, nationally acclaimed horticulturalist.

Young Kate Sessions was obsessed with exotic flowers and the plants which produced them. Her work was noticed by the city fathers of Coronado and she was offered a ten-acre plot of ground to continue her work. In 1888, she resigned her teaching position and opened a florist shop at the present site of 5th and C Streets in San Diego where she sold cut flowers and seedlings from her Coronado nursery.

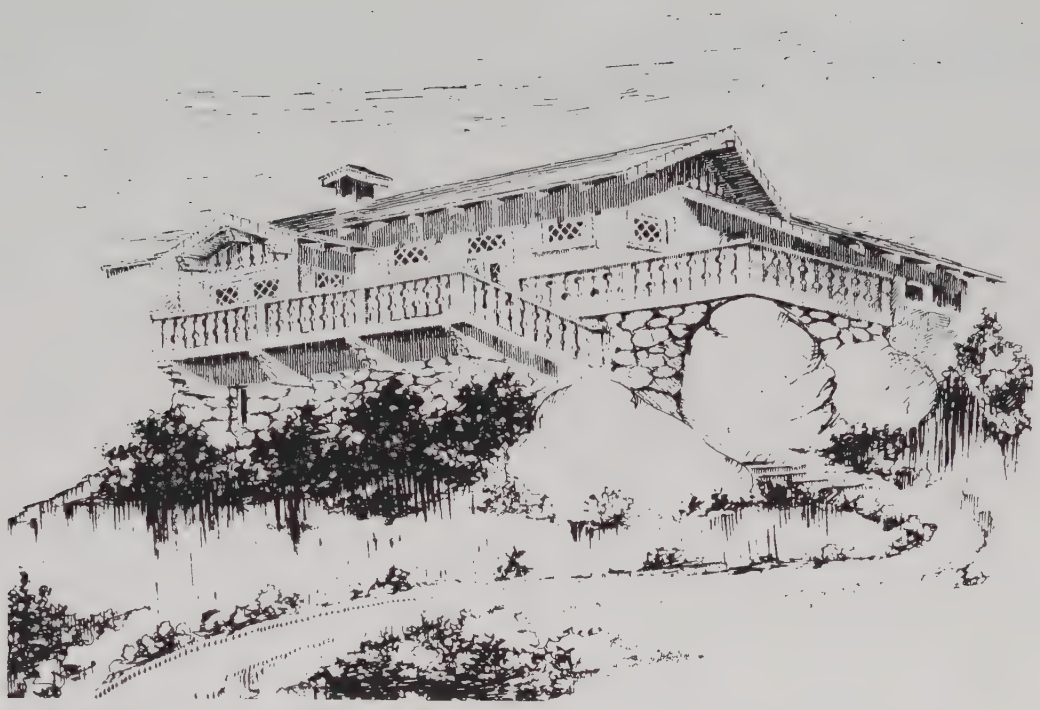
The success of her flower shop stimulated local interest in exotic plants, particularly in many strains of palms. John D. Spreckels was among the first to recognize her talent and commissioned her to beautify the grounds of his personal Coronado mansion and landscape the Hotel del Coronado after its completion in 1888. In 1903, the San Diego City Council voted to renovate and enlarge "City Park," 1,400 acres of land set aside by farsighted city fathers more than a quarter-century earlier. Predictably, Kate Sessions was chosen for the job. The size of the undertaking was so massive that she moved her nursery to a more convenient location in Mission Hills where the City built a special street car line to the front door to expedite matters. During the first years of this century, she continued her untiring efforts to improve the Park, planted hundreds of palms in Mission Hills, and designed the landscaping for Horton Plaza that featured twenty-eight rare *cocos plumosa* palms. Years later, Spreckels again called on Kate Sessions to assist in the monumental task of landscaping the 1915 California-Panama Exposition fairgrounds in Balboa Park.

Kate Sessions horticultural genius didn't escape the attention of Ed Fletcher who was busy developing his Grossmont Park subdivisions. An important part of his program involved landscaping selected home-sites with trees and shrubs furnished by Kate Sessions. The many immense eucalyptus trees now on Grossmont began as flats of seedlings, 100 to each flat, provided by Kate Sessions and planted by Fletcher on weekend hikes up the mountain. After the first homes were built, she again was called upon to design their gardens.

In appreciation of her assistance and as a token of their friendship, Ed Fletcher gave Kate Sessions a lot on Grossmont, located today at 9710 Summit Circle. The deed was recorded in 1917. A redwood cottage was built on the site, and she spent many weekends there. In 1925, Mr. C. A. Davis bought the three acre plot known as "the Kate Sessions' Rose Garden" and set out avocados on the land.

A Swiss Chalet on Grossmont

When Hubert Guy and Marie Schumann announced their intention to be married on August 15, 1915, the mother of the bride-to-be, Mme. Schumann-Heink, gave the couple an acre of land (today located at 5310



Architect's drawing of the J. Hubert Guy home on Grossmont, built in 1915.

Valle Vista Road) and instructed Ed Fletcher to build them a honeymoon cottage of their own design on the property.

Although the house was designed as a Swiss Chalet, it was built almost entirely with California redwood. It was situated on a knoll in order to capture the sweeping panorama of the surrounding lowlands from El Cajon to Lemon Grove and beyond. The seven room house totaled 3,000 square feet of living space, much larger than most early cottages on the mountainside. The three bedrooms on the main level were built four to five feet above what would be termed a "sunken living room" today. On a lower level were the servants' quarters. A central patio was enclosed on three sides by the house and bordered on the front by a massive rock wall built by transient Mexican labor.

Several features of the Guy house along with the sunken living room are considered highly desirable by modern architects; however, in 1915, they often were unintentional and viewed as innovative if not daring departures from the norm of that era. For example, a customary attic was eliminated in favor of a 16-foot high "cathedral" ceiling in the living room, and exposed redwood trusses foreshadowed today's popular "open-beam" ceilings.

The extensive use of clear, knot-free redwood of a quality seldom found today provided a real charm for the cozy home, particularly for the inside rooms covered with the satin-smooth panels which were installed with "no stains or preparation used whatsoever. Nail holes (were) left."

Since Ed Fletcher had been given the responsibility for building the home, he insisted that his contractor, Adam Georgia, use expensive redwood throughout despite the fact it increased the final construction cost to more than $3,000.

At one end of the living room was a small nook highlighted by a typical "period" fireplace made from granite blocks, hand-hewn from the boulders outside. Above the nook was a tiny balcony entered from a landing off the stairway leading to the elevated bedrooms. At the opposite end of the living room, a slightly raised platform was built later to serve as a mini-dance pavilion for the Prom of Grossmont High School's graduating class of 1928.

Soon after the Guys moved into their new home, Mr. Guy was rejected for military service because of consumption. The couple were forced to abandon their dream cottage while futile attempts to cure this disease were undertaken in various parts of the country. As timed passed, the house was owned by Edmund Keeney, Howard and Paul Avery, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hafter, and Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hill.

The completed home. Both the interior and exterior were constructed with prime quality redwood, straight-grained and devoid of knots. Consistent with most early Grossmont homes, The foundation facade was built with hand-hewn granite rock found on the premises.

UNSOLICITED ACCOLADES MADE PROMOTION EASY

Healthful Climate Promotions - The Description as Paradise - The View - Privacy

Unsolicitated accolades concerning Southern California in general and San Diego in particular attracted national attention soon after the Civil War and increased in intensity over the years that followed. The influx of newcomers responding to the promotions resulted in the boom of the 1880s and indirectly helped set the stage for Grossmont's successful development after the turn of the century.

Before the arrival of the railroad in 1885 and the agricultural revival after the completion of the flume in 1889, land promoters considered the climate to be San Diego's greatest virtue. Tom Fitch, the vociferous champion of San Diego's back country, summed up the situation when he shouted, "I don't give a hoot if you cannot grow a bean within forty miles of here! It's the climate we're selling, not the land!"

The Army's Chief Meteoroligist, General A. W. Greely, added his highly respected opinion about the local weather which enhanced San Diego's image even further:

> "The American public is familiar with elaborate and detailed statements of the weather at a thousand and one resorts. If we believed all we read, the temperatures never reach the eighties, the skies are flecked with just enough clouds to perfect the landscape, the breezes are always balmy and nights are cool. There is possibly only one place where such conditions exist — a bit of country about forty miles square in the extreme southwestern part of the United States in which San Diego, California, is located."

The most significant feature of the local climate that attracted a large percentage of the newcomers to the area was its healthful aspect. The strong appeal reached the sickly and infirm hoping to get well, and also the physically fit desiring to stay that way. Dr. Peter Remondino, the city's first "Medical Officer," colorfully explained that the earliest arrivals enjoyed many physical benefits while, at the same time, reaped satisfying financial rewards:

May 3. 1912

My dear good friend – I read so much about "Paradise" – well I think I found my dreams realized when I saw Grossmont in our blessed "California" and I am happy as a child in thoughts of my wonderful future home "Casa Ernestina"

Always yours
Ernie Schumann-Heink

When Madame Schumann-Heink sent this note to Ed Fletcher, enthusiasm was at a high pitch as she anxiously awaited the completion of her new Grossmont home in August, six months hence.

> "The United States has a small section off its southwestern corner which will give to a man a life of ease, comfort, luxury, and besides allow him at the same time to accumulate wealth to any amount. If you have any doubt about this, just look at the early Americans who came here in the period of the annexation of California (1850). They are endowed with Falstaffian pouches, Bonificial noses, and Teutonic complexions of roses, never sick, with digestions to be envied by the ostrich or aligator; lungs like a blacksmith's bellows and hearts as tough as that of a turtle. Their muscles are firm and frames sturdy, and their bank accounts are unlimited."

In 1886, the San Francisco Chronicle suggested that money could be earned anywhere, but healthy and happy living conditions could only be found in a few places such as Southern California:

> "My friends, money alone does not make life worth living. People make money, even in Texas; in the fever breeding swamps of the Lower Mississippi; in the home of the blizzard and cyclone and thunderstorms of the middlewest; in the rigorous clime of New England, and the ice and snow of Alaska. Think of making money at the same time in Southern California which is the rich man's Utopia and the poor man's Paradise and God's Great Sanitarium for the afflicted of the world; where winters are so warm and summers so cool that even a thermometer cannot tell one from another; the only place on earth where people pray for bad weather to give variety and spice to what otherwise would be three hundred and sixty five sunshiny days in the year."

In summary, the nationwide publicity regarding the local climate not only attracted many new arrivals who were convinced the cure-all weather was their physical salvation but also appealed to many others for various reasons. Eastern and midwestern farmers were tempted to move to greener pastures; displaced war veterans and other homeless individuals were attracted by the prospect of discovering gold and other newfound riches; lawyers, doctors, undertakers, barbers . . . all envisioned fresh new fields to conquer. Gamblers and land speculators could hardly wait to head west. As the number of newcomers increased, their letters to their families, friends and particlarly their hometown newspapers increased correspondingly. Thus, during the final quarter of the last century, the local populace outgrew their counterparts in the northern part of the state and other sections of the country as well.

The next best thing to a personal tour of Grossmont's homesites was a visual brochure illustrating the beauty of the topography and exciting panoramas surrounding the mountain. To accomplish this, Ed Fletcher climbed the massive boulder perched on Grossmont's summit and snapped several pictures in every direction which he bound in a small, 4" by 6" photo album. Each photograph was pasted on the typical black pages and indentified by a handwritten description in white ink. A dozen or so were compiled and served as Grossmont's first promotional brochures. One photo included in the albums showed the Coronado Islands, clearly visible from the Grossmont Summit.

The Description as Parsdise

By the time Grossmont Park and Villa Caro subdivisions (1906-1910) and later, Mount Helix (1915) land sales were attracting a substantial number of new residents, the reputation of the twin mountains as exclusive residential areas was rapidly becoming established. Significantly, a majority of the land buyers already were sucessful individuals, well-known in other parts of the country, whose unsoliciated accolades provided a built-in promotional theme. A favorite description for their new homesites included the word *paradise*. Ever since Montalva Amadis described the Island of California as "near terrestial *paradise*" centuries ago, the word has appeared with regularity in correspnodence and conversations among residents of the local area. Several quotations come to mind:

Under a dateline of 1912, Madame Schumann-Heink wrote, "I read so much about *paradise* — well, I think I found my dreams realized when I saw Grossmont . . ."

Theresa Carreno, famous pianist and among the first land buyers on Grossmont, wrote: "If there can be a spot on earth in which all that nature contains can be found, it is that most beautiful place near San Diego

That the view from Grossmont of Ocean, valley, and mountains Equals any and surpasses most views in our Country, is my opinion. I can think of no other spot within with an almost perfect climate so much color, beauty, & variety — and I have traveled repeatedly & extensively in every State of the Union, except Oklahoma -

Owen Wister

Owen Wister searched the nation for an ideal place for his retirement, ultimately selecting Grossmont as indicated by this note written to Ed Fletcher.

If there is a spot on the face of the earth in which all that Nature contains of beauty can be found it is that most beautiful place, near San Diego in California, called Grossmont.

The beautiful invigorating pure air, the restfulness of this earthly Paradise one can only realize ~~on~~ in Grossmont when ~~on~~ the dream of my life is to be able to live there!!

April 1914 Teresa Carreño

heresa Carreno was among the any who sent letters of appreciation to Ed Fletcher for introducing them to the beauty of rossmont.

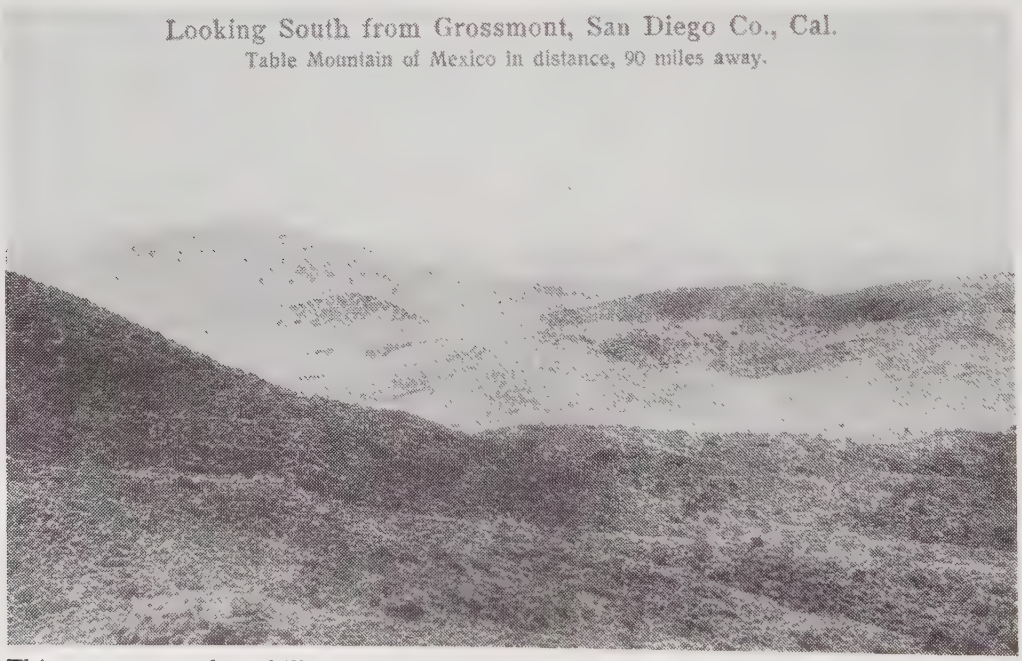
called Grossmont. The invigorating pure air, the restfulness of this earthy *paradise* one can only realize when on Grossmont."

Even without the word *paradise,* other tributes to Grossmont were equally effective. When Owen Wister, noted author, exclaimed that he "could think of no other spot in the country with so much color, beauty and variety as Grossmont" the resulting publicity was invaluable!

Later, when poet John Vance Cheney selected the area as the subject of his composition, "At Grossmont," its reputation was further enhanced. Last, but not least, when Carrie Jacobs Bond created a ballad entitled "A Cottage in God's Garden," referring to her Grossmont home, continued interest and settlement was assured.

The View and Other Pleasing Features

Any area claiming to be an "earthly paradise" must have several qualifying characteristics. As noted, near the top of the list was Grossmont's climate, so pleasing that chronic complainers were left with only a mild objection to its monotonous regularity. Other pleasing features included the beautiful, sloping hillside dotted with imposing boulders and covered with a loamy soil that encouraged the rapid growth of a variety of vegetation. Last but not least were the magnificent views that stretched out in every direction leaving visitors awe-struck. Distant horizons unveiled exciting panoramas reaching from the mountains to the sea.



This penny postal card illustrates the wonderful view from Grossmont's summit, and also suggests that privacy was another virtue of the area during the first decade of the 1900s.

When Admiral "Fighting Bob" Evans anchored his fleet in San Diego harbor during his 1906 voyage around the world, he visited the back country with Ed Fletcher, and later stated: "I consider the view from Grossmont one of the finest in the world."

In 1911, noted landscape engineer Samuel Parsons wrote: "The widespread beauty and commanding reach of Grossmont astounded me! Great views can be obtained in other places in San Diego though none perhaps is as far reaching and impressive as Grossmont's."

Kansas newspaper editor W. D. White wrote in 1914: "I know of no other spot in the world where the climate and scenery are so delightful as they are in Grossmont. Mountain and sea, city and field, all are found in one wonderful view."

And finally, Owen Wister added that "the view from Grossmont of ocean, valley, and mountains equals any and surpasses most views in our country, in my opinion."

Still another virtue for any place presumptuously comparing itself to paradise is privacy. Grossmont's first residents had an overabundance of privacy . . . a whole mountain of nothingness. This heavenly seclusion, of course, lasted only as long as it took for others to discover it; then their homesites were no longer secluded and their virtuous solitude became a distant memory.

Not bothered with neighbors here.

This obversation was as good as any description of Grossmont in 1916 when *House Beautiful Magazine* photographed Hubert and Marie Guy's new Swiss chalet style house at the present site of Valle Vista Road, off El Granito Avenue.

Taken from Owen Wister's home.
This home is on "Grossmont" ~~and~~ which ~~it~~ is a mountain thickly populated by celebrities. viz: Madame Schumann-Heink; Carrie Jacobs Bond; Owen Wister; the author. J. Vance Cheney-Cook, and others. I am merely popular - not notorious. It will not be amiss to mention I am sure, that a view from the front porch is commanded of the bay of San Diego nine miles to the west where ships can plainly be seen plying their course to the Pacific. The Coronado Islands ~~are~~ twenty five miles southeast in the Pacific are distinctly visible like those huge mountains silhouetted against the horizon. Beautiful "Camp Kearney" is plainly discernible ~~twenty~~ two miles to the north, as well as the Table Rock mountains of Mexico & the South. The east view over the El Cajon Valley - famous for its vineyards is no less beautiful than that of the wonderful "Cuyamaca" mountains that stand tall & stately in their faithful guard on the fertile valleys below.

Famous author, Owen Wister, wrote: "The view from Grossmont of ocean, valleys, and mountains equals any and surpasses most views in our country . . . "J.Hubert Guy, elaborated on Wister's opinion with his descriptive notation on the back of a photograph of the Guy house (right) taken from the porch of the Wister home.

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT THE SCHUMANN-HEINK HOME IN 1913

Four lengthy articles written by syndicated news columnist, John D. Barry, appeared in the *San Francisco Daily News* between December 8th and 13th of 1913 describing a visit to the newly-completed home of Madame Schumann-Heink at Grossmont where he enjoyed a Christmas dinner. The chef extraordinaire was William Gross who fancied himself as a culinary expert, accepting dinner invitations only if he were allowed to assist in its preparation — or, as described here, permitted to handle the cooking entirely.

The series of articles illustrates the ability of early journalists to capture and retain reader interest while describing a drab subject, such as a simple dinner at a faraway place. Successful writers of that era relied on colorfully descriptive phrases and humanistic appeal rather than depending on controversial or sometimes disgusting subject matter.

Mr. Barry added a touch of mystique to his articles by intentionally omitting popular names of persons and places, realizing they would immediately be identified by his readers. He used thousands of flowering phrases to cover the subject — so many words that his articles have been substantially reduced for the presentation on the following pages:

"The great artist explained . . . ' when you come down tomorrow, don't expect much. We live in a shack. The next day around the curves we wound and presently stopped in front of a beautiful villa, looking over the mountains and out to the distant sea. So this villa was the shack! I had been deceived!"

Ways of the World

by John D. Barry

WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 10, 1913

ON THE ROAD: Experiences in San Diego, Including Dinner Prepared by an Amateur Cook in Honor of a Great Artist.

It was after the concert in the Los Angeles Auditorium, packed with humanity, that the great artist explained her plans. She was glowing with excitement. Her success of the afternoon was to be followed by a brief interval of rest at home with the children. "We shall take the night train for San Diego. When you come down tomorrow, we shall have everything in shape. But don't expect much. We live in a shack."

My explanation that I had a special regard for shacks was received with an amused smile, the meaning of which I was to understand later.

At noon the next day, at the railway station I saw the great artist seated in an automobile, bundled up in wraps, no longer the dazzling figure of the day before, shimmering in silks and jewels, but the comfortable housewife, her face glowing from the ride in the cold air, her eyes laughing with her characteristic good humor. In a few moments we were speeding through the town, past great business blocks and past a magnificent hotel that reminded me of New York. So, in this remote southwest corner of America there had developed a metropolis.

Already the moon was rising above the distant mountains that grew rapidly nearer and nearer. Eagerly the machine took the heights, seeming to rejoice in its display of power. "Don't expect anything fine." The words came from among those wraps in a rich contralto. "I told you we lived in a shack." Far away I could see an occasional light from a cottage on the mountain side. Suddenly it would disappear as we swept over a great space of country thick with underbrush. Now we were passing a picturesque little house, with a rustic porch. A few moments later we reached another and another. We were in the midst of the little colony where there had gathered an interesting group of musicians and painters and writers, some of them of world-wide celebrity. Around the curves we wound and presently we stopped in front of a beautiful villa, looking over the mountains and out on the distant sea. So this villa was the shack! I had been deceived!

Before I had time to express my feelings the front door was opened and out trooped a lively company, silhouetted in the light. They consisted partly of the retinue of the artist and partly of her large

family, two of the boys, husky ranchmen from their nearby ranches, and one of the girls, a flower-like creature of seventeen, and party of friends. Soon there was excited talk in English and German in a big, comfortable living room, with an open fireplace while we removed our outer coverings and made ready for dinner. As I took myself off to my room I was warned that there was to be no primping. Evening clothes and all such vanities were taboo. Besides, dinner was ready and many appetites were impatiently waiting. The Lord of the Mountain from whom the mountain took its name, a neighbor and an old friend, with his own hands, had prepared a feast worthy of the wandering artist's return. Where was he? At this moment in the kitchen, keeping an eye on the stove, I should meet him only when I took my place at the table.

For an interval the view from the windows of my room made me forget about preparations for dinner. The world seemed to consist of mountains, rolling into the distance, bathed in a pale blue light from a multitude of stars. Suddenly I heard loud calls, protests against vanity. They speedily drew me into that big room leading to another big room with a long table bright with linen and china and flowers. Here the Lord of the Mountain appeared, slim of figure, with thick white hair and a white pointed beard, and with keen, smiling blue eyes, and wearing a big, white apron and the white cook's cap. He was indulging in the hobby developed by many a camping tour in the East and in the West to give pleasure to his friends, whose fondness for domesticity could not be weakened by more than forty weeks each season on the road.

That meal proved to be one of those feasts that leave you wondering how you have lived to tell the tale. There was salad and rich soup and turkey that

"... we lingered, for a few minutes, out on the porch. The moon was well up in the sky now ... and the world seemed to consist of mountains, rolling into the distance, bathed in a pale blue light from a multitude of stars."

melted in the mouth and more vegetables than you could remember and hot mince pie and several other kinds of dessert and coffee and fruit, not to mention delicious dishes unrecognizable by name, tucked in, so to speak, between courses. I suspected that amateur cook, who so adroitly kept plying us with food and with liquids that seemed to minimize the quantity, of a deep purpose. He wished at one stroke to incapacitate the great artist and then to keep her in this retreat the whole holiday season. But she was too clever for him. Unlike some of the rest of us, she knew when she had enough. She was keeping an eye on the date two days ahead when she was to sing a great program that included several Wagnerian arias, not to speak of those encores that she always granted with such prodigality.

When, finally, we dragged ourselves from the table, it was nearly bed-

" The Lord of the Mountain, from whom the mountain took its name . . . with his own hands had prepared a feast worthy of the wandering artist's return. (Soon) the Lord of the Mountain appeared, slim of figure with thick white hair and with a white pointed beard, and with keen, smiling eyes and wearing a big white apron and the white cook's hat . . . "

time. We lingered, for a few minutes, out on the porch. The moon was well up in the sky now and the stars had grown even more brilliant. The air, too, had taken on mildness. In the distance I could see a faint light that marked the line of the shore.

Back in the big room, before the fire, we had talk about the wonderful world of music, seemingly so far away, of New York and Chicago and Bayreuth. It was Bayreuth that the singer's thoughts turned most fondly, to the inspiring performances and the colleagues, and the suppers after the performances, and to the Wagners and all the associations and traditions. The Lord of the Mountain, with the insignia of the kitchen removed from his frame, revealed himself as an accomplished talker and story-teller. He, too, in earlier days, had been associated with the world of art. He had known what it meant to live in trunks for weeks at a time, to try to snatch a rest on sleepers, to eat at hotels and to long for the comforts of home. No wonder he had become so domestic. Now his great pleasure in life was making his friends happy in a large hospitality that included inexhaustible personal service.

The next morning we were up early, ready for an all-day outing. First, there was the walk before breakfast, with the mountains rising all about us like the billows of the sea and with the real sea shimmering in the distance and reaching out toward Japan, making a streak of gold on the horizon. After breakfast, we climbed into the machine, the great artist wearing a white sweater with a purple band, just as becoming as those marvelous creations she wore for the great public. Again we wound over the heights, gradually descending into a lovely valley that stretched away toward the horizon.

UNEXPECTED EVENTS AT THE SCHUMANN-HEINK HOME

Spies Everywhere! - Suspicions About Madame Schumann-Heink's Loyalty - The Army Invades the Home Searching for Spies - Kobiash, Japanese Naval Officer alias Domestic Servant - Letters to a German Spy - The Murder of Willie Besthorn

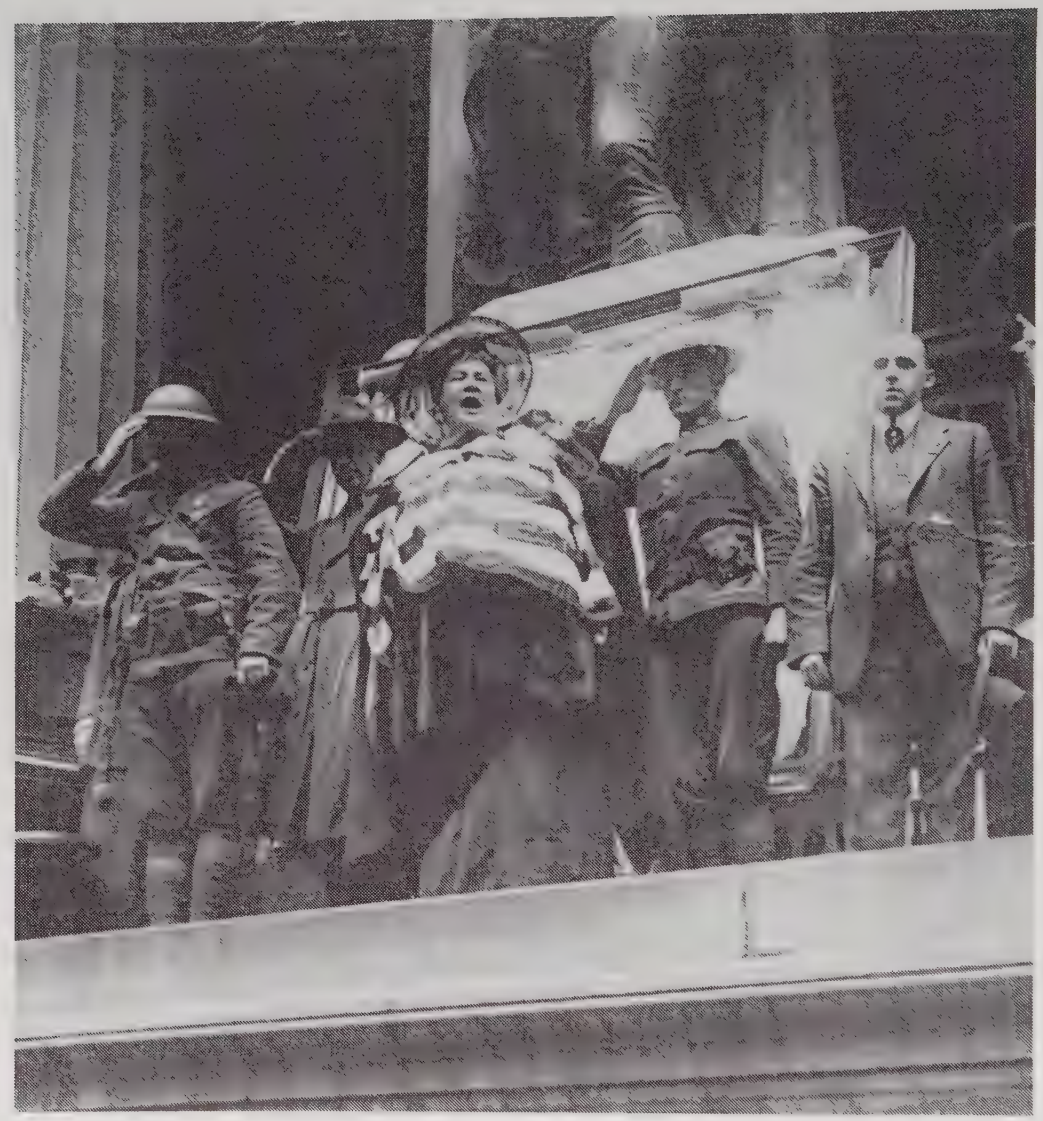
Spies Everywhere!

During World War I, espionage was an underdeveloped profession. Foreign agents existed, but were so unsophisticated that they generally were ignored by the U.S. Secret Service. The government took a "who cares?" attitude toward spies because it was obvious that primitive lines of communication would render the value of their information useless by the time it reached the fatherland.

Although the government was not overly concerned about spies, the general public was very concerned. A national paranoia had developed. A person innocently walking his dachshund dog was liable to be reported as a German spy; or a Japanese tourist, predictably carrying his camera, could expect to be reported as a foreign agent photographing military installations. The average citizen was convinced that espionage agents were everywhere!

Suspicions about Madame Schumann-Heink's Loyalty

Madame Schumann-Heink's tireless efforts in promoting the sale of war bonds during World War I and her continuous performances at military camps and hospitals were acclaimed daily in newspapers nationwide. She was revered by all servicemen who referred to her as "Mother," an endearing title that endured among veteran's organizations long after hostilities ceased. In spite of her many displays of loyalty, she constantly found her allegiance questioned because of her German lineage and because of minor occurrences at her Grossmont home — a startling paradox brought about by the fame and position of the grand lady herself. Her popularity was so great that the media constantly presented every aspect of her personal life which included both her deep personal association with Germany as well as her patriotism to America which should have gone unchallenged.



The individual effort of Madame Schumann-Heink during her performances at military camps, hospitals, and street corner gatherings resulted in the sale of more war bonds than was accomplished by any other single individual and firmly established her unchallenged patriotism to America.

It was common knowledge that she was almost forty years of age when she left Germany to become an American citizen. Suspicious critics also uncovered the fact that her eldest daughter, Charlotte, and her eldest son, August, remained in Germany when the rest of her family moved to America in 1904. When this information was spread across the nation's newspapers, Madame Schumann-Heink immediately was cast as a possible German spy . . .

The media continued to write the saga of her son August who, at the outset of World War I, was an officer aboard a Hamburg-Amerika passenger liner which was impounded in New York City. He and the rest

of the crew were cut adrift and told to fend for themselves. Naturally, August contacted his mother and she provided him with monetary assistance until he was able to sign aboard a South America bound banana boat and ultimately return to the fatherland. Upon his arrival, he discovered the German Intellegencia was as disorganized as America's when he was jailed as an American spy. Six months of incarceration passed before he was able to convince officials of his loyalty to Germany. Months later he was assigned to the U-53, a German submarine, as Navigation Officer.

Meanwhile, as plaudits for his mother's patriotic efforts in America were accumulating faster than clipping books could be assembled, an enterprising reporter with an eye for sensationalism discovered that two of her sons were serving in the armed forces on opposing sides — August on a German U-boat, and George as a fireman on the American destroyer, *U.S.S. Tenedores.*

When it was noted that both ships to which her sons were assigned were operating in the same general vicinity in the North Atlantic, news mongers glistened with glee over the potential intrigue of a developing story. And when it was learned that August went down with his submarine shortly before the war's ending and George, at the same time, survived the wrecking of his ship on the rocks in the Bay of Biscayne, the story took on legendary proportions. To warped journalistic minds, the "brother versus brother" theme seemed to have a nice ring to it, particularly the implication that one may have killed the other. The incorrect myth persisted as popular newspaper copy across the country.

Had this coincidence happened to someone of lesser fame, it wouldn't have attracted the widespread attention it did. But the extensive publicity about Madame Schumann-Heink's eldest son being a "German U-boat officer" clearly suggested that the Intelligence Service investigate the possibility of her being a German spy despite the difficulty in challenging her obvious patriotism.

The Army Invades the Schumann-Heink Estate

While this conjectural hoopla was circulating around the Schumann-Heink family ties to Germany, another strange event happened at her Grossmont home. Francesca Tapia, the Mexican maid, became violently ill with stomach flu causing her to adjourn to the bathroom many times during the night. The bathroom light being turned on and off all night long didn't go unnoticed by Carrie Jacobs Bond, the nearest neighbor to the Schumann-Heink home.

Although the traffic on El Granito Avenue passing in front of the Schumann-Heink home was limited to one or two vehicles a day at most, the large American flag was displayed whenever she was at home. Date: September, 1913.

Mrs. Bond, world renown for her musical compositions, was a straight-laced individual who was overly concerned about espionage activities. Despite being an old friend of Madame Schumann-Heink, she felt obligated to report the night-long blinking on-and-off of the bathroom lights that she suspected were some sort of signals being flashed to a ship in the harbor.

Because of Carrie Jacobs Bond's reputation, her complaint automatically stirred Army Intelligence into taking some action. For want of something more dramatic, a squad of soldiers was stationed at the front gate of the Schumann-Heink home to record the arrival or exit of any mysterious strangers or other clandestine activities. When Madame Schumann-Heink, then in Chicago, was advised of the situation by Mr. Eighmy, Grossmont postmaster, she was furious. She considered the Army's decision to post troops at her driveway gates as a personal effrontery and reacted in a manner typical of the great singer — she had Mr. Eighmy hire her own squad of security guards and station them inside the driveway gates to keep the soldiers outside.

After introductions, the two opposing factions settled down to a boring duty tour and passed the time by playing checkers through the wire driveway gates. The great Grossmont stand-off of World War I soon became so ridiculous that both groups disbanded and went their separate ways.

Kobiash

Madame Schumann-Heink continued her tireless entertainment tours of military camps and hospitals and was acknowledged to be directly responsible for the sale of more War Bonds than any other single individual during World War I. The possibility of her being an enemy agent was the furthest thought in the minds of the cheering thousands who gathered around her bond-selling performances. Her deep loyalty to America should not have been challenged, yet picky little coincidences happening around her Grossmont home kept alive the uneasy suggestion that she could be a German spy.

One was the case of Kobiash, a Japanese domestic hired in 1915 from a pool of Oriental labor available from the staff of the Stratford Inn at Del Mar. For two years, Kobiash performed his duties satisfactorily and assumed responsibilities well enough to allow family members to leave the Grossmont home for extended periods without concern over routine daily problems. He worked from dawn to dusk every day except Sunday when, he explained to family members, he "would watch the ships and photograph the beautiful harbor."

Suddenly, Kobiash disappeared. His departure was unexplainable until a year later when a letter arrived from Japan in which he expressed his appreciation to everyone at Grossmont who had made his life so pleasant — and enclosed his photograph on the bridge of a small Japanese naval vessel. The notation on the back stated, simply, "I am commander of the ship — Kobiash."

Only because the war had ended before receipt of Kobiash's letter did this information pass without news coverage. The fact that Madame Schumann-Hienk had employed a foreign spy would have made a noteworthy story even though she knew nothing about his background during the time he worked at Grossmont.

Letters to a German Spy

Unlike the Kobiash affair, another embarrassment that did receive national attention in the newspapers involved Madame Schumann-Heink's daughter Marie, who lived at Grossmont at the time.

When Marie first encountered Richard von Miller on a train trip in the Northwest, he introduced himself as a Count and showed her letters from influential, well-known people to substantiate his status as German royalty. When she returned home, she wrote von Miller letters "in a

joking way." This correspondence ceased when she discovered her new-found friend was not the person he claimed to be.

Von Miller, alias Captain Schmidt, left a trail of bad checks and unpaid hotel bills wherever he went. More importantly, he was being hunted by the Secret Service as a German spy. Before long he was captured on board a Union Pacific train traveling between Seattle and Salt Lake City but succeeded in breaking away from his captors and jumping from the moving train. Injuries from the fall caused his death in Denver the following day.

In Von Miller's personal effects were letters that proved he was a German naval officer and a spy, including one addressed to the daughter of Fred B. Whitney, president of the Lake Submarine Company that built submarines for the British navy. A letter from Marie, also was found but proved to be more embarassing than incriminating.

"Letters which were printed as coming from me were incorrectly translated (from German) by the newspapers which gave them the wrong meaning," Marie explained. "This developed into a more serious situation than I believed possible since I was engaged to Mr. Guy at the time. However, he looked on the whole matter as a joke."

Since Mr. Guy didn't speak German, he was unable to decipher what actually was conveyed in the letters. But being a trusting soul, he accepted what his fiance had to say.

A Juicy Murder Spices Up a Drab Story

The August 10, 1968, issue of the San Diego Union in its **"Fifty Years Ago Today"** column reported:

> August 10, 1918 - Mme. Schumann-Heink arrived from New York yesterday to attend the funeral services for her gardener.

Readers in 1968 probably wondered why this item was considered newsworthy fifty years earlier. What the brief news report failed to include was the fact that the gardener's funeral was the culmination of a highly-publicized murder that occurred at the Schumann-Heink home on July 25, 1918 — a bizarre event that jolted the elite members of Grossmont's Colony for Artists back into the world of reality.

The gardener was Wilhelm Besthorn, one of the many sailors cut adrift from their impounded German ships at the outset of World War I.

Central figures in Grossmont's first murder were Francesca Tapia, the Spanish maid (left), and Leslie Lee, the Korean cook (center), domestics employed by Madame Schumann-Heink (right). Their "sweetheart" arrangement was interrupted by the arrival of a handsome German sailor, hired as a gardner at the Schumann-Heink home. An inevitable eternal triangle developed, not without a certain international flavor, and ended with Grossmont's first exposure to crime.

Many of these men turned to Madame Schumann-Heink knowing that she was born, raised and began her career in Germany and other European countries. Although she was later expelled from Germany because of her allegiance to the United States, she did not consider this affront by the Kaiser as a good reason to turn away the young German crewmen without some assistance. One sailor she helped was Wilhelm Besthorn who she sent to California to work as a caretaker at her Grossmont home. Willie was one of the characters who couldn't have been better cast by Alfred Hitchcock to play out the area's first grim exposure to crime.

The others included an attractive Spanish maid named Francesca Tapia whose fleshy relationship with a Korean cook named Leslie Lee began in 1914 when both were employed as domestics at Madame Schumann-Heink's Chicago mansion. When they were sent to her Grossmont home in 1915, their earlier experiences together added substance to their relationship — or at least, the Korean cook felt that way.

This story begins, then, with the disturbing arrival of the new Grossmont groundskeeper, Willie Besthorn, a handsome German sailor. Before long, an eternal triangle developed, not without international intrigue. The quest for the affection of the Spanish maid by both the frail

Korean cook and the virile German sailor was no contest from the start. But the little Korean had an equalizer — a .32 Calibre Marlin rifle.

The finale of the story unfolded on a warm summer afternoon when the maid, Francesca, was busy hanging laundry on the clothesline outside, perhaps wondering about the unauthorized absence of her co-workers, Leslie Lee and Willie Besthorn. Both men had disappeared five days earlier, on Thursday, July 25th, leaving only a note in Lee's handwriting explaining that Willie Besthorn had "gone to Imperial Valley and would be away for a day or two."

Suddenly, Francesca was interrupted by the barking of the family's dog, Jimmy. While digging nearby, Jimmy had come upon a bone, but it wasn't exactly the kind of bone he'd been hoping for. The August 3, 1918, issue of the *La Mesa Scout* reported that Francesca "investigated and discovered that the bone which evidently had been uncovered by the dog had been owned by Besthorn." — a polite way of saying that the bone was Besthorn's arm.

The first person summoned to the scene was Mr. Eighmy, postmaster and proprietor of the Grossmont Store. It was no secret that he was a member of the Secret Service, and thus the proper person to alert. Immediately, he suspected foul play rather than suicide, noting that it would

Among the first to be summoned to the murder scene was Mr. Eighmy, Postmaster and proprietor of the Grossmont store. It was no sceret that he was a member of the Secret Service and thus the proper person to alert.

have been difficult for Willie to bury his own body. Coroner Shuyler Kelley, Deputy Sheriff O. B. Saxson, and Dr. J. G. Shea all agreed with his theory and together they cautiously conceded that a murder probably had been committed.

Proving the obvious fact was the responsibility of the Coroner's Jury. The first evidence presented was the fact that a bullet had crashed through Besthorn's head at a downward angle, indicating he was lying down on the ground or bending over. A person was not likely to commit suicide in such an uncomfortable position.

A second pertinent point was that a garden hose had been left running on the day of Willie's disappearance, cutting a deep channel in the ground and flooding the lower orchard area. The jury surmised that even the most troubled person bent on suicide wouldn't turn the water on just for spite, and probably would have been considerate enough to turn it off before killing himself. Finally, the rifle established as the murder weapon had been returned to its normal resting place in the greenhouse, some distance away from the location of the body.

In light of these facts, the jury was comfortable with its verdict of "death by unknown parties with homicidal intent." The next questions were who committed the act and why. Leslie Lee had not been seen since the day before the murder, and his absence was incriminating. But what was the motive?

The *La Mesa Scout* wrote that "Besthorn had become quite well acquainted with the people in the locality and was a splendid specimen of manhood, genial and friendly and generally liked and respected by all who knew him." Perhaps his attractive personality contributed to his undoing. It clearly appealed to Francesca; the newspaper noted that "the two had become sweethearts."

If this was true, it's logical to assume that the little Korean cook, not equipped with the physique or appealing character of his adversary, took a dim view of the situation. Few doubted the eternal triangle theory was the true underlying motive. But when Francesca was placed on the witness stand to confirm or deny it, she suddenly forgot how to speak English, a sly maneuver which avoided incriminating either of her lovers or, for that matter, herself.

An interpreter could have been summoned, but this was deemed unnecessary when a more logical motive was uncovered. It was disclosed that Willie kept several hundred dollars in a trunk which appeared to have been ransacked. Further testimony established that ill-feeling prevailed

between the two men because of Leslie Lee's failure to repay several loans made to him by Besthorn. Also, it was reported that when a cache of Mme. Schumann-Heink's jewels were missing six months earlier, Leslie Lee placed the blame on Besthorn and this accusation caused the animosity between the two to reach the boiling point.

Evidence against the Korean cook was overwhelming, but it was circumstantial. Thus, when Coroner Kelley secretly told the jury that he had reason to believe Leslie Lee was still in the area and police "were hot on his trail," it was decided that the jury shouldn't express their true feelings of guilt for fear it would scare the suspect away. Thus, the verdict came back as "death at the hands of parties with homicidal intent unknown to the jury."

Not surprisingly, Leslie Lee never returned to work at the Schumann-Heink home. But, without an outstanding warrant for his arrest, he was able to go as he pleased and subsequently was seen on several occasions by members of the Schumann-Heink family.

Francesca Tapia, on the other hand, returned, and for the next year and a half worked as a maid at the Grossmont home of Mme. Schumann-Heink's daughter, Marie, and her husband, Hubert Guy. Her ability to communicate in English returned as quickly as it had disappeared at the Coroner's inquest, and presumably her leisure hours became a lonely and boring existence compared to the lively adventure it must have been before the tragedy occurred.

Mansions Make Thoughtful Gifts

The Grossmont home of Mme. Schumann-Heink was not unlike a two-edged sword: on one hand were the comfort of its rambling size, the pleasure of its scenic panoramas, and the luxury provided by the climate and topography; on the other hand were the inconvenience factors of its geographic isolation and the expense of daily upkeep and general maintenance of the premises.

As Mme. Schumann-Heink's fame spread to all corners of the world, visits by business associates, family, and friends increased. The difficulties in reaching the Grossmont location prompted her to move her "official" residence to a three-story stone mansion at 800 Orange Avenue in nearby Coronado which she purchased from her good friend, John D. Spreckels, railroad and sugar tycoon. Thus, in 1922, the Grossmont home was orphaned, occupied by various family members until 1928.

GIFT TO VETERANS—The $230,000 home at Grossmont, near San Diego, which was presented to disabled veterans by Schumann-Heink, in memory of two sons who lost lives, one fighting for America, the other for Germany.

Associated Press photo.

Chicago Herald & Examiner 4/13/29

SINGER GIVES LOCAL HOME TO VETERANS

Mme. Schumann - Heink Sobs At Tribute Paid By Ex-Soldiers

By United Press

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., Apr. 10.—Grossmont estate of Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, opera singer, was given to the disabled American veterans of the World war at a dinner here last night. The estate is valued at $230,000.

According to the deed which was given to Mayor Leach, the estate is to be administered as a haven for sick and disabled veterans and their families.

After announcing her gift, Madame Schumann-Heink was led from the room when she sobbed as veterans played taps for her two sons—one killed serving the German cause, the other a soldier of her adopted land, America.

"You honored me by honoring my son who died on a submarine," she said on her return to the room. "He may have killed some American boys with his submarine, but he could not help that. It was war, you know. That is why I give you Grossmont; I love you. That is why I do this."

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Mansions Make Thoughtful Gifts

During the late 'teens and early twenties, Madame Schumann-Heink's strenuous concert schedule criss-crossed the country by rail and auto during eleven months of each year leaving little time for her to enjoy her Grossmont home. It became a burdensome luxury even though it continued to serve as her business headquarters, supervised by family members and maintained by a staff of servants.

But its geographic isolation was inconvenient for visitors and prompted Mme. Schumann-Heink to search for a more centralized location. She chose Coronado where she purchased the three-story stone mansion at 8th and Orange Avenues from John D. Spreckels, railroad tycoon and sugar magnate. The Grossmont home was orphaned, used only for occasional visits. Some referred to it as a white elephant.

And so Madame Schumann-Heink gave it away . . .

She visited her Grossmont home only occasionally. There were no thoughts of selling the property until unexpected financial reverses in 1927 placed it in a position of a luxury the 66-year-old singer could no longer afford. The home was placed on the market, but buyers weren't clamoring to burden themselves with a quarter-million dollar estate tucked away in a remote corner of the Southwest.

After a year passed, she took matters into her own hands and solved the problem in her own inimitable fashion — she gave it away.

After a "ham and cabbage dinner" given in her honor by the Disabled American Veterans of Minneapolis, Minnesota, on April 9, 1928, the famous singer rose to her feet and presented the chapter with a surprising gift — her Grossmont estate. A few days later, Mayor Leach officially accepted the gift and announced that Erandon Judah, Ambassador to Cuba, and Major General Douglas MacArthur would serve as trustees to carry out Mme. Schumann-Heink's wishes that the property be converted into a retirement home and a haven for sick and disabled veterans and their families.

But before the program could get underway, the Crash of 1929 financially crippled everyone, including the D. A. V. Unable to afford even the basic maintenance costs, they placed their gift up for sale two years later. Immediately, bitter conflicts erupted among other veterans' organizations who demanded their share of the pie. But these controversies gradually faded away as the estate remained unsold during the years of the depression that followed.

It was a dark hour for the Grossmont home. Unpaid taxes were mounting and other expenses continuing. At last, in 1934, with the blessing of her mother, Mme. Schumann-Heink's daughter, Marie, released the D. A. V. from their obligations by paying the back taxes and other outstanding bills totaling $4,000 and became the new — and appropriate — owner of the Grossmont property where she had been married in 1915.

GROSSMONT'S CRAZY BALLOONIST

Grossmont played a part in local aviation history although its role was more of an amusing aftermath than a significant contribution. The story centered around a tiny clapboard cabin and an adjoining ramshackle tin hangar on the north side of El Granito Avenue nestled among the better groomed homes of Grossmont's "Colony for Artists." The property was registered with Postmaster Eighmy in 1914 as the "Toliver Navigation Company" and thus, everyone believed the seldom-seen occupant was C. H. Toliver who had founded a venture in San Diego three years earlier to provide transcontinental travel by balloon "which would quickly replace the railroads, just as the railroads had replaced the stage coaches."

The reason he moved from San Diego to Grossmont, everyone assumed, was due to the collapse of his company when its propelled dirigible, the *San Diego,* ingloriously plopped into a canyon at 31st and B Streets during its scheduled maiden flight on November 11, 1911. The outrage of hundreds of bilked investors was a good enough reason for Toliver to isolate himself in total seclusion on Grossmont.

But Toliver was dead, killed soon after his company failure. Many Grossmont neighbors, unaware of his murder, naturally assumed it was Toliver living on the property. Others who remembered the sensational murder trial knew it couldn't be Toliver. Nobody really cared about the identity of the mysterious occupant whose constant tinkering and hammering inside the sealed building clearly suggested he was building a replacement balloon for the ill-fated *San Diego.*

Recollections of the strange recluse have been recounted by the late Marie Fox and Thelma Todd who, as young girls living on Grossmont at the time, remember circumventing the rickety hangar on their way home from school even though it necessitated a much longer walk up the mountainside from the Grossmont Station. Everyone avoided a possible confrontation with the mysterious occupant who soon became identified as "Grossmont's Crazy Balloonist."

In the early 1900s, man's ability to fly was no longer an impossible dream and inventive minds frantically searched for mechanical means to make it practical. Balloons received the most attention at first. After Germany's Count von Zepplin created his propelled "dirigible" in 1911, the door was opened for opportunists, both qualified and unqualified. One of the latter was C. H. Toliver who was a better promoter than an

engineer. Upon hearing of Zepplin's success, he immediately formed the "Toliver Navigation Company" and began construction of a big propeller-driven balloon which would "do for America what Zepplin had done for Germany."

He extended his apologies to the shareholders of the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads who, he explained, were about to lose all their invested money when the railroads were forced into bankruptcy because of his balloon service between San Diego and New York City. He urged them to sell their railroad stock immediately and re-invest in his company, reminding them that Count von Zepplin's company went begging at first, then soared past the 1000-mark value overnight. His convincing promotion attracted many investors and the dollars began pouring in as fast as new stock certificates could be printed and filled out.

In his book, *Fallout from a Skeleton's Closet*, Herbert Lockwood provides an interesting treatment of the Toliver Navigation story which is worthy of paraphrasing in part:

The company was comprised of Toliver, his wife, and assistant named Hubert Lewis described as "a feeble string bean," and Hubert's wife. For months the four worked feverishly to complete a balloon propelled by four 32-horsepower engines which, they guaranteed, would carry passengers across the country "faster than the fastest express, as smoothly as a fish, and as straight as the crow flies."

The initial launch was scheduled for November 11, 1911. As the zero hour approached, the crowd tensed and the big balloon tugged at its restraining ropes. It shook, it wobbled, and then it collapsed into a giant pile of rubble and slid down the canyonside.

Stockholders of the company were in shock, totally dissatisfied with Toliver's explanation that "San Diego's water is too pure — not enough minerals to juice up the acid which, when mixed with iron filings, produces the gas." Their disillusionment was complete when, a short time later, winter storm winds lifted the collapsed bag from the canyon and deposited it a few blocks away, prompting Toliver to exclaim that this movement was proof that his contraption could fly.

The failure of the *San Diego* was a financial catastrophe for the investors who took little comfort in Toliver's insistence than the future still was rosy. Toliver, too, was disappointed, but his despondency was soothed considerably by the fact that he emerged with a fistful of the investors' money.

On November 11, 1911 the maiden flight of Toliver's dirigible resulted in a disappointing pile of rubble.

Toliver's sickly assistant, Hubert, was well aware of Toliver's financial bonanza and asked for his share of the money. When he was told to take the next balloon to China, anger surged in his veins. It required several days for Hubert to muster enough courage to confront Toliver again, this time armed with a .38 Police Special revolver. Even the advantage of a pistol in his quivering hand failed to frighten Toliver who laughingly rejected Hubert's second demand for money. This was the last straw — Hubert closed his eyes and pulled the trigger, again and again. When the smoke cleared, Toliver lay dead on the floor — and, unexpectedly, so did Mrs. Toliver who had been standing nearby. Poor Hubert was arrested for murder.

Soon after the trial began, matters took on a sordid twist. The attorneys lightly dismissed the idea that the motive for the killings was Toliver reneging on a promised financial arrangement with Hubert. They pounced on the juicier thought that the murders were a direct result of a bitter feud the existed between the two wives. A confused Hubert was merely a ploy.

The defense attorney established the fact that Toliver had violated Hubert's petite Swedish wife which, he pleaded, in itself was just cause for Hubert to kill him. Hubert's wife conceded that she had submitted to Toliver's advances — but only after Mrs. Toliver had confided in her that

Hubert, too, had enjoyed extra-curricular flirtations with other women on many occasions. Mrs. Toliver had learned about Hubert's escapades "during a trance while visiting a physic," but that was convincing enough for Hubert's wife.

The jury, however, chose to believe that Mrs. Toliver had first hand information about Hubert's infidelity, and her exuberance in gloating over her conquest irritated Hubert's wife beyond description. And since Hubert was putty in his wife's hands, it was not difficult for her to goad him into killing the Tolivers.

Courtroom spectators listened to the shocking testimony in disbelief as a sniveling Hubert was clutched closely to the side of his vivacious wife. The jury believed that the Tolivers were guilty of promoting the wife-swapping arrangement which, in those days, was scandalous rather than fashionable, and Hubert's wife was easily persuaded to join. Poor Hubert had been used. Simply, the jury believed the Tolivers were animals and deserved the punishment they received!

Mentally crushed, Hubert was acquitted and staggered out of the courtroom into temporary oblivion.

When equipment and materials once belonging to the Toliver Navigation Company reappeared on Grossmont in 1914 and the land was registered in the name of Toliver Navigation Company, the handful of people on the mountainside didn't care. As mentioned, those unaware of the trial three years before assumed it was Toliver; those who remembered the trial knew it wasn't Toliver and simply identified the newcomer as "the crazy balloonist."

The mystery man could have been no-one else but frail little Hubert who had returned from his self-imposed exile. Presumably, after his acquittal, he and his wife gathered up whatever remained from the Toliver Navigation Company — including the money which may, or may not have precipitated the shooting. But when Hubert arrived at Grossmont, he was alone. His pretty little wife was gone, and so was Toliver's money.

Hubert passed from the scene shortly afterward.

GROSSMONT'S CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL AGRICULTURE

"Grossmount Tomatoes" - The Avocado Garden of the World - "If They Ain't Rotten, They're Good!"

Advising a farmer to abandon the loamy soil of a level valley in favor of a steep rocky hillside to plant his crops certainly wouldn't receive favorable consideration — if it received any attention at all. But in the case of winter vegetables (and avocados), growers learned that a frost-free environment and better drainage on the higher slopes were, in fact, better suited. Winter vegetables in particular were vulnerable to the heavy cold air that settled in the valleys during their growing season.

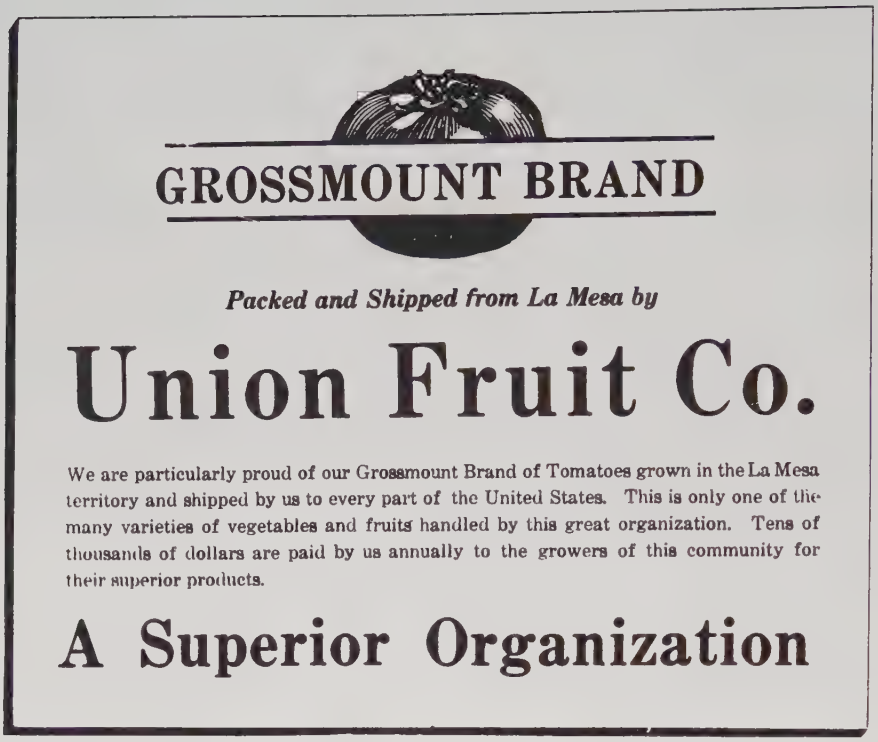
The idyllic growing conditions of today's Grossmont and Mount Helix were discovered by a man named John Adams McClurken in 1902. He acquired a large section of the mountains from the government and set out 1,200 acres of wheat and string beans. Following the first excellent harvest, McClurken realized he had neglected a most important consideration: there was no way to move the harvest down the mountainside to the marketplace. His anticipation of an agricultural coup was thwarted by the inaccessibility of the farm.

Grossmount Tomatoes

Twenty years later when Grossmont and Mount Helix were criss-crossed by a network of roads and water was being pumped to their summits, McClurken's original plan re-appeared and became a profitable reality. It was then that La Mesa's largest packing house, the Union Fruit Company, decided that the abundant sunshine and excellent soil conditions of the foothills would produce fat juicy tomatoes during both winter and summer months and agreeded to finance extensive plantings and subsequent maintenance. A widespread advertising campaign promoting "Grossmount Tomatoes" was launched.

Despite the misspelling of the brand name, Grossmont's first commercial adventure succeeded. In 1926, the La Mesa Scout reported that "one of the most important industries in La Mesa is the Union Fruit Company which is the marketing agent for the famous Grossmount brand of tomatoes."

Between 1922 and 1926, the company increased its annual shipments of tomatoes to its primary eastern markets from $45,000 to $130,000,


GROSSMOUNT BRAND
Packed and Shipped from La Mesa by
Union Fruit Co.
We are particularly proud of our Grossmount Brand of Tomatoes grown in the La Mesa territory and shipped by us to every part of the United States. This is only one of the many varieties of vegetables and fruits handled by this great organization. Tens of thousands of dollars are paid by us annually to the growers of this community for their superior products.
A Superior Organization

Despite the incorrect spelling of its name, Grossmount Brand Tomatoes was a very successful early commercial venture.

representing 115 carloads. An average acre yielded 300 boxes that sold for $1.85 a box in Chicago, and the vine-ripened tomatoes were shipped by steamer to San Francisco where they brought $1.25 a crate.

Everyone was pleased with the development of the new industry. Each year, La Mesa businessmen furnished the Union Fruit Company with "$9,000 worth of shook (crate panels), $300 worth of nails, 70,000 labels, 4,500,000 tissue wrappers, and other small incidentals."

The affluent residents of Grossmont, their flowering gardens ablaze with color, didn't object to a crass business venture invading their domain. There was ample room for a happy co-existence and the national distribution and promotion of Grossmount Tomatoes was good from a publicity standpoint.

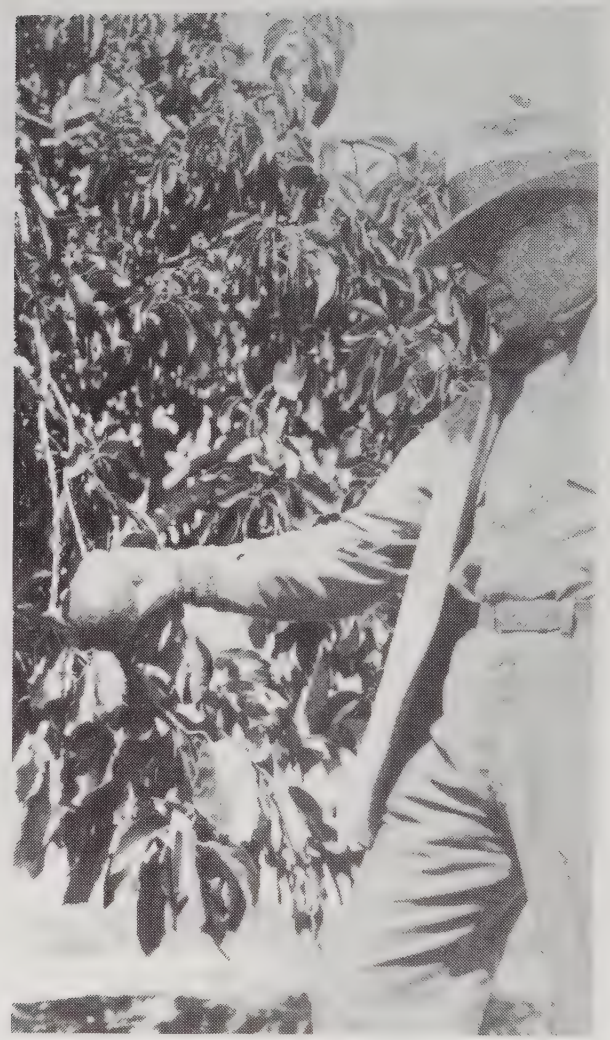
In 1926, a lucrative side-benefit emerged from Grossmont's tomato industry. A rancher, appropriately named R. E. Ground, allowed an acre of his tomatoes to go to seed which he packaged and shipped off to various parts of the country. The result was quite satisfying: first, he avoided the bother of harvesting and packaging the fruit, and secondly, he netted $7,500 from the sale of the seeds which was far more than he would have realized from shipping the fruit itself.

While a newly planted grove of avocado trees grew to maturity (indicated by stakes), tomato plants were harvested in the rows in between.

"The Avocado Garden of the World"

A shipment of trees imported from the West Indies in 1885 produced an exotic fruit the old-timers called "butterfruit." It was called "midshipmen's butter" by American sailors who were introduced to it during earlier worldly travels. Others called the fruit an "alligator pear" because of its wrinkled skin. Probably the earliest reference to it was penned by a young American writer named George Washington while he traveled through Barbados in 1751. He wrote of an "agovago pear."

In 1910, the Department of Agriculture ended the confusion over the name by officially selecting the name "avocado," a combination of the Mexican word" aquacate" and the French word "avocat". That year, the government imported a large quantity of small avocado trees for the purpose of establishing a new agricultural industry. Since growers were totally unfamiliar with the fruit, the government further subsidized the program by sending a team of horticulturalists to Mexico and Central America to study the farming techniques, growth patterns, varieties, and other pertinent characteristics. Cooperative Mexican ranchers set forth all the essential requirements for successful growing — loamy soil, good



Several large groves and many backyard avocado orchards blossomed on the Grossmont hillsides during the early years of this century. Dr. Charles M. Fox is seen in this photograph inspecting the fruit hanging from his Fuerte tree.

drainage, and frost-free nights. It was clear that the avocado would thrive only in a few, isolated sections of the country where the climate was temperate. Thus, the first group of imported avocado saplings were shipped to the closest qualifying area — Southern California.

The initial plantings in the local area were made in the El Cajon valley because it was the heart of the county's agricultural activities. But optimistic expectations failed to materialize and concerned growers recognized the need for a location where there was less temperature variation and better drainage.

When someone glanced at the adjoining Grossmont mountainside, the thought occurred to him that the light breezes at the higher elevations would cause less temperature differences than existed in the boxed-in valley. Further, drainage would be superior on the hillsides. And thus, after years of being spurned by the valley farmers, Grossmont received an inkling of recognition — just maybe it was no longer "useless."

The Grossmont area proved to have the ideal climate. Initial plantings not only thrived, but were easier to cultivate, irrigate, and keep insect-free than citrus or other orchard crops. Within five years, several groves were producing large quantities of fruit. It was time for the *La Mesa Scout* to boast about their "favored area".

> "The avocado industry is firmly established in *favored* sections of California. It is conceded by nurserymen that San Diego County is the 'Avocado Garden of the World' because of its *favored* climate and conditions of humidity. It is being determined by plantings now in bearing that there is no section more *favored* for commercial planting than La Mesa."

By 1915, avocado plantings on Grossmont and in the surrounding areas had matured sufficiently to produce an abundance of fruit. However, since it was still a little-known gourmet food, the supply continued to exceed the demand.

Despite the difficulty in educating slowly developing markets, several far-sighted landowners recognized the future potential of the

Avocado trees and other young plantings thrived on the good drainage (and protection from the wind) to go along with the temperate climate of Grossmont and Mount Helix.

In 1923, the Ed Fletcher Company set out several large plots of Grossmont and Mount Helix land in several different varieties of avocodos. One was the T.M. Hayden experminental grove on the northern flank of Grossmont. The Schumann-Heink home is seen at the upper right.

avocado. Groves were set out alongside the Grossmont homes of William Gross, Dr. Wray, and Mr. Lewis. They experimented with different varieties such as the Puebla, Blake, Perfection, Dickerson, and Fuerte and their success prompted the Ed Fletcher Company to enter the field commercially. The company planted 400 trees — 250 on the western slope of Mount Helix and 150 on the northern side of Grossmont.

The success of Grossmont's avocado industry is reflected by the names of several streets built around 1920 including Nabal, Puebla, Queen, Anaheim, Fuerte, and others — all avocado varieties. Not to be forgotten is the main north-south thoroughfare on the eastern end of Grossmont and Mount Helix which, not surprisingly, was named Avocado Boulevard.

Egg Plant Eggs Are
Not Merely Eggs—
They are Fresh, Sterile and Sanitary
and all that these words imply.
FRESH—gathered twice daily and the
date on the guarantee slip tells you
just when they were laid
STERILE—free from the life germ and
universally recognized as being far
superior to the fertile eggs for human
food.
SANITARY—from healthy contented
hens who are fed only clean, whole-
some food and water and housed in
the most scientific and sanitary man-
ner
You Are Invited to visit the Egg Plant
at any and all times and observe for
yourself the superior conditions under
which these eggs are produced.
We are prepared to make daily deliver-
ies to individual buyers.
J. HUBERT GUY, Manager
THE EGG PLANT
GROSSMONT, CAL.

The San Diego Union, Sunday, July 28, 1916

Until 1916, San Diego county's poultry industry was complacent and disorganized. Farmers were content to raise chickens "on the side." The *Egg Plant*, above, was the first venture designed to produce eggs on an exclusive basis and to emphasize quality.

"If It Ain't Rotten, It's Good!"

In his *Memoirs*, Ed Fletcher wrote: ". . . in 1901, when in the wholesale produce business, I conceived the idea of buying butter and eggs by the carload, shipping them from Wisconsin and Kansas, putting them on ice for four or five months, then selling both eggs and butter for cooking — buying when prices were low and selling at a higher price. I believe I brought the first carload of eggs and butter into San Diego, buying butter at 9 cents a pound and eggs at 8 cents a dozen."

People were satisfied with months-old cold-storage eggs because everyone accepted the oversimplified conclusion that "if an egg ain't rotten, it's good!"

This tolerant attitude by consumers resulted in a lackadaisical approach to the poultry business. Chickens were raised "on the side" by farmers who considered almost every other daily chore more important. Their hens roamed about drinking rancid barnyard water and eating

The Egg Plant property, located near today's Chase and Pine Street in El Cajon, originally was part of Hervey Parke's *Villa Caro Ranch* purchased by Ed Fletcher and William Gross in 1902. The land was resold to Madame Schumann-Heink in 1910. Hubert Guy's decision to locate his chicken ranch on that particular land was simplified by the fact that he married Mme. Schumann-Heink's daughter, Marie, in 1915.

putrid maggoty meat or scratching food from a manure pile where undigested grain already had passed through another animal.

Raising chickens could be started and operated with a minimum of expense. Such conditions should have resulted in many flocks providing an abundance of eggs, but paradoxically, this was not the case — the poultry business lagged far behind other fields of agriculture. As late as 1915, local egg production from an estimated 125,000 laying hens amounted to one egg per day per San Diego resident. More than that number of eggs were shipped in from Northern California and the east — eggs which probably weren't fresh when they started the trip and surely were stale at the conclusion of the trip.

Raising chickens was the farthest thing from Hubert Guy's mind on August 15, 1915, when he married Marie Schumann. Unknowingly, this was the start of a new direction for the local poultry industry. A 15-acre lemon grove at the foot of Grossmont, originally part of Hervey Parke's Villa Caro Ranch, was a wedding present from the bride's mother, Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Hubert Guy realized that the citrus industry was almost saturated with new groves springing up everywhere while, on the other hand, a challenging potential seemed to be hidden within the disorganized and complacent poultry business.

Thus, he didn't hesitate to sell his automobile tire company for the necessary capital to convert the lemon grove into a chicken ranch, receiving $1,000 for his business, the building, and the half-block of downtown property located at First and A Streets. Within months, the first hutches were nestled among the lemon trees and his new business, *The Egg Plant*, was underway.

Guy rationalized that when people became aware of the difference between fresh eggs, stale eggs, and rotten eggs, they would demand fresh eggs produced locally under clean conditions. And so he launched a promotional advertising campaign emphasizing the fact that Egg Plant eggs weren't "merely eggs"— they were dated to guarantee freshness and they were sterile and sanitary.

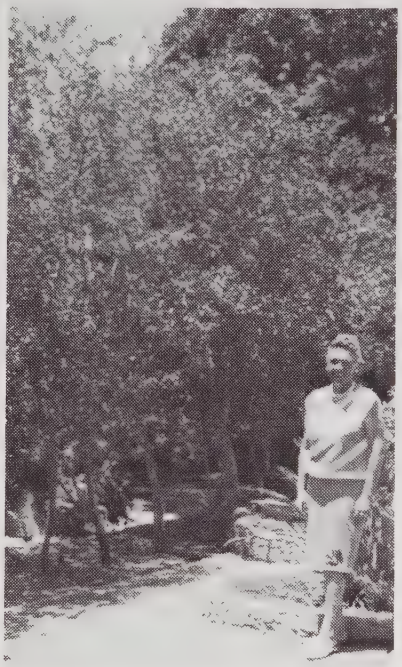
To substantiate his advertising theme, it was essential that his eggs were, in fact, of the highest quality. This involved expensive installations of innovative features such as extra-long runways to exercise the laying hens, shelters for temperature control, above-ground hutches for cleanliness, and the best grade of feed. To keep costs near the competitive level of 25 cents a dozen, Guy imported a superior strain of leghorn chickens from the east which were capable of laying 200 eggs a year — double the number produced by the average barnyard fowl. Although his cost per egg was higher, the increased number of eggs per chicken offset the additional expense.

Guy also observed that fellow chicken ranchers were happy to share new ideas and techniques with each other. No-one objected to the

The flashy pick-up truck with the *Egg Plant* logo on the side provided a touch of class to the ranch operation which was the first such local venture devoted exclusively to raising chickens and producing eggs. The owner, Hubert Guy, is seated directly behind the front seat; his wife, Marie, is seen in the front, far side. Hans and Zelda Heink are seated in the rear.

suggestion of a cooperative effort which, among other things, would reduce the cost of feed through volume purchases. First, grain was purchased by the carload rather than by the sack, then as time passed, by the trainload rather than by the carload. This amounted to a saving of $23 per ton. From this beginning, the San Diego Poultry Association emerged which, during the following years, successfully directed the organized chicken ranchers into a position of prominence among other local agricultural industries.

The Strawberry Guava



Jean Guy standing beside a 12' guava hedge. 1969

The guava, like the avocado, sapota, and other exotic tropical fruits, require the warmth of temperate weather zones common only to Southern California and the southern tip of Florida. It flourished in the Grossmont/La Mesa area where the plants, usually described as bushes, grew so large that they became popular as decorative hedges and, when given time, became full-fledged trees over 12' tall.

Between 1880 and the turn of the century, many different varieties of guavas were imported from Brazil, Costa Rica, and Guinea. But only the sturdy and prolific "strawberry guava" met the demands of commercial production which increased rapidly during that period as other sections of the country became familiar with its excellent jelly-making qualities.

Doctor E. P. Wilson was among the first local experimenters with guavas. The first bushes were intended to decorate his La Mesa home, but the plants grew and produced enormous harvests, he retired from medicine and began a second equally successful career producing guava jelly on a commercial basis.

GROSSMONT HIGH SCHOOL

During the 'teens, graduating students from the thirteen grammar schools serving the local area who wished to continue their education had to choose between three tiny clapboard buildings operating as self-designed "high schools." The most conscientious students rejected all three and elected to take the tedious train trip back and forth to San Diego every day in order to attend San Diego's Russ High School.

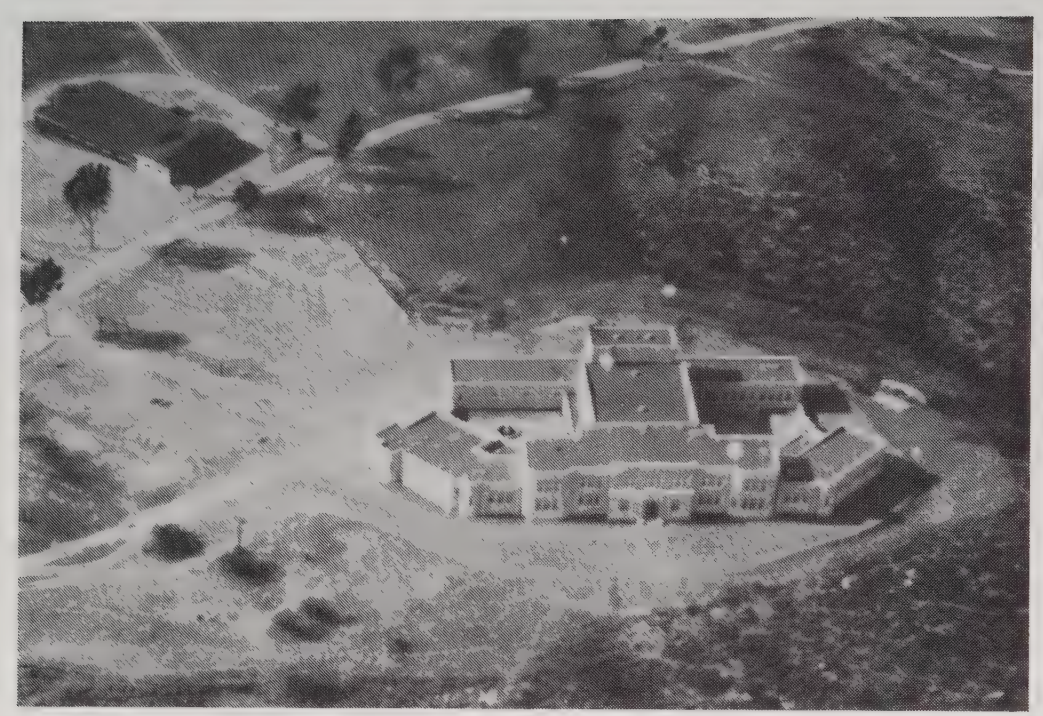
Clearly, a high school comparable in size and academic standards to Russ High School in San Diego was needed to accomodate the rapidly growing populace of the east county.

In an article in the *La Mesa Scout* on September 20, 1919, a prominent educator from El Cajon, J. L. Cutler, proposed a new high school be constructed at a central location between El Cajon and La Mesa, namely, at the foot of Grossmont. The site would be "equally accessible for students from the most densely populated areas as well as those from the more distant areas. Further, the railroad that linked the outlying points passed directly by the suggested location with its Grossmont Station at the front door. And water and other utilities already were available, *en situ*."

The proposal seemed logical. Every one should have been pleased, but they weren't. Each of the thirteen little communities where a grammar school was located were opposed to the idea. Each wanted their area to be the site of any new school, realizing that it would increase real estate values and attract other profitable enterprises around it. The single point of agreement, then, was that the high school should **not** be built at Grossmont.

As the controversy raged on, a confused Mr. Cutler found himself cast as the villain rather than the hero. He responded sharply in another *Scout* article, accusing each grammar school district with purely selfish motives and added that, as far as he was concerned, the matter was closed. The threat of losing a new high school brought the feuding factions together, at least temporarily.

On July 12, 1920, a meeting was called and, following a stormy debate, a proposal to consolidate all members into a single high school district was approved. The next step was gaining the voters' approval for



Overhead view of the original Grossmont High School buildings

a $110,000 bond issue for funds to build the school — wherever it was destined to be.

On November 5, 1920, the school bond issue passed easily by a vote of 1126 to 345.

Money now was available to build a school somewhere. The site selection was eased considerably when Ed Fletcher offered to donate a section of land large enough to build a high school and to accommodate its future expansion. The land was at the foot of Grossmont where Cutler had suggested it be built in the first place. Fletcher's offer became even more attractive when he also agreed to provide the granite blocks from his Grossmont Rock Quarry at no cost to construct the impressive facade for the castle-like school building.

The stalemate was broken. In July, 1921, construction began and in September of the following year, Grossmont High School opened. The speedy construction was a remarkable achievement with only a few items incomplete on the day of the opening. Installation of the blackboards had been delayed, but this was not particularly disappointing to the pupils. The auditorium would be completed a few months later. "With the exception of the molding," twelve classrooms were ready for the schools first enrollment of 365 pupils. The faculty included seventeen regular teachers and a musical instructor employed on a part-time basis.

School Bussing, 1923 Style.

The nearby railroad, an earlier selling point for the Grossmont location, turned out to be little help because the train passed the school at the wrong time on its once-daily round trip between San Diego and Foster. Hence, busses were placed in service and provided "a splendid system of free transportation for all, any boy or girl living a dozen miles from the building has an equal opportunity with one living nearby."

But school bussing, even then, was not without its complications. The first problem arose when local residents discovered that the busses were a pleasant convenience for them as well as their children. This caused signs to be posted immediately on all busses advising that "Visitors are not Permitted!"

Another problem resulted from the patriotic decision of the school board to paint the busses red, white and blue. This upset state politicians for unknown reasons, and they refused to pay for any additional vehicles until all were painted black and yellow.

After three turbulent years, matters quieted down. *The La Mesa Scout* reported that "prospective residents can be assured of the best high school facilities for their sons and daughters. The building is beautiful, well-arranged, comfortable, and sanitary. It serves as an endless source of gratification to those who carried it through to a successful accomplishment despite many discouragements and mistaken opposition."

The original site for the Grossmont High School was donated to San Diego County by the Fletcher family. And the native granite from which it was constructed also was furnished by Ed Fletcher from his stone quarry on Grossmont.

Grossmont High School in 1923, a year after its opening.

Grossmont High School's Ivy Facade

In 1923, two Grossmont High School students, Karl and Dinon Busch, planted a few cuttings of English Ivy they had gathered from the former Castle Rock Ranch (presently the Parkway Plaza Shopping Center) at the newly completed Administration Building. Little did they realize the intriguing historical background associated with the small pieces of greenery that, someday, would cover the entire front entrance to the large stone building.

During the early 1880s, J. M. Asher, owner of Castle Rock, visited the home of Washington Irving at Sunnyside near Tarrytown, New York, which had become famous as the setting for the author's stories of *Rip Van Winkle* and *Sleepy Hollow*. While there, he snipped a few cuttings and brought them home to be planted on his ranch. The ivy originated from slips taken from Scotland's Melrose Abbey (made famous by Sir Walter Scott's writings) when Irving visited with Scott in the 1840s.

The "traveling ivy" covering the stone facade at the front entrance to the main building originated from slips taken from Washington Irving's estate in the 1880's. Irving, author of *Rip Van Winkle* and *Sleepy Hollow*, received the slips he planted from Scotland's Melrose Abbey made famous by Sir Walter Scott's writings in the 1840's.

THE MOVIES COME TO GROSSMONT

Thomas Edison's Vitroscope - Film Companies Head West- S & L Studios - Spooky-Ookum - Grossmont Studios, Inc.

As the 1920s dawned, mechanized instruments rapidly replaced personal appearances as the main source of theatrical entertainment. Moving pictures, or "movies," had made substantial advances since the turn of the century in the form of brief comedies or dramas, lasting just long enough to allow the live vaudeville performers time to change costumes between their stage performances.

Thomas Edison's Vitroscope

Pictures that moved were invented by Thomas Edison in 1896. Since he believed patent rights were unnecessary, the idea of his unprotected "vitroscope" quickly was stolen by several self-acclaimed film companies that could foresee the rich financial potential in the movies. Hurriedly, they patented their own versions of Edison's idea. Heated competition was fierce.

The "war" between the new film companies first took aim at the camera crews of their competitors — with rifles. It was an uneasy situation for the cameramen although not life-threatening since the targets were the expensive cameras not the cameramen who could be more readily replaced.

The long and violent battles finally ended as the tired combatants agreed to organize under a trust which received court approval. Historians disagree whether Edison was invited to join the monopolistic group or whether he declined to work with the people who had, in effect, stolen his invention.

Film Companies Head West

About 1908, several film companies moved from the midwest to the southwest where climatic conditions year 'round were more conducive to movie making. At that early date, attaining a desired background was not accomplished by building an elaborate "set" — rather, the entire filming operation was moved to the locale of a desired background. Naturally, the same background couldn't be used too often without the chance of it being recognized in different films; thus, running out of

In 1911, Alan Dwan located the first movie company in the local area at 4th and Lookout Avenues in La Mesa. After directing more than one hundred 15-minute one-reelers during the next year, he moved to Hollywood where he became a highly successful director of hundreds of full-length movies.

scenery was a problem that caused most companies to be constantly on the move to new locations.

One company was the American Film Company of Chicago which moved its western operation from Lakeside to La Mesa in 1911. Under the direction of Alan Dwan, the La Mesa company produced more than a hundred "one-reelers" with such dynamic titles as *The Yiddisher Cowboy of La Mesa, The Poisoned Flume,* and *Sloppy Bill of the Rollicking R.* By 1913, most of the nearby scenery had been used over and over again, and the American Film Company moved to an ostrich farm near Santa Barbara where fresh background settings were available.

About 1916, another ambitious writer and movie-maker began his career in the local area and, like Alan Dwan, soon moved on to fame and fortune in Hollywood. His name: Cecil B. DeMille.

Also in 1916, James A. Murray sold 40 acres of his Murray Hill property to Empire Feature Films which, according to the *El Cajon Valley News*, was "to expend at least $20,000 during the next six months. The main building was to be 360 feet long with a stage 200 feet long and 80 feet wide with various types of architecture. There were to be other buildings, a clubhouse with permanent quarters for actors, and a swimming pool planned to be built below the lake."

Before the optimistic plans for Empire Feature Films could be started, movie making in La Mesa came to an abrupt halt with the advent of World War I.

The S & L Studios

In the early 1920s, Ed Fletcher approached Arthur L. Sawyer, prominent in western film circles, and offered to lease him a large tract of land on the northern side of Grossmont for the construction of a movie studio. The area was ideally suited for such a project with natural settings such as Mexico, the seashore, and the mountains, all within "shooting distance." Also, for the first time in the film making business, Fletcher suggested that a huge structure could be built that would house several special-built "sets" such as a barroom, a hunting lodge, the exterior of a southern plantation, perhaps a jail and others.

When it was suggested that these sets could be rented, hundreds of self acclaimed "producers" who were scrambling for a share of the rapidly growing motion picture market expressed a keen interest in the idea. Only a few of them were financially able to cover the cost of an average production even though expenses seldom exceeded a few thousand dollars with the cost of building "sets" for background scenes the major expense item. Thus, the possibility of renting ready-made sets would be a happy solution for both the studio and producers.

Local citizens were electrified by the news that a $400,000 movie studio would be built on Grossmont. The backers, Sawyer and his partner, Bert Lubin, used their initials to create the name S-L Studios and promised that Grossmont and the surrounding communities would soon become the "mecca of the motion picture industry." Sawyer was the man of the hour. And to prove that he deserved recognition as an esteemed civic benefactor, he generously offered local merchants and citizens the opportunity to "share" in the bonanza they were assured would come. Everyone happily rushed to become a stockholder, quickly subscribing to shares equal to 100% of the building costs.

Dedication ceremonies for the first of four planned S-L Studio buildings was held on November 9,1922, with a crowd estimated to be 15,000 in attendance.

On February 22, 1922, the *La Mesa Scout* gave front page coverage to the construction of the S-L Studios noting that the main building soon to be completed would house a stage 256 feet long, 60 feet deep, and 49 feet high. Sixteen carpenters were busy finishing the four sets to be used for the filming of the studio's first production, *A Man's Friend*, starring Barbara LaMarr. The article also reported that a lunch counter at the rear of the building had been completed, reflecting the prevailing optimism that everyone enjoyed.

The dedication ceremony for the first of the four planned S-L Studio buildings was held on November 9, 1922, with a welcoming crowd estimated at 15,000 to 20,000 people including "an unusual galaxy of stars from Hollywood" in attendance. Sawyer was pleased with the turn-out, not only as a congratulatory gathering, but also as a group that included more potential investors who were needed to cover the additional cost of the three proposed new buildings.

With this in mind, Sawyer instructed his cameramen to film the enthusiastic crowd throughout the proceedings — capture the moments of human interest that would appeal to future buyers of S-L stock. Full coverage was given to Barbara LaMarr as she daintily laid the cornerstone for one of the new buildings while "a group of graduate nurses from San Diego who had invested money in the company" stood in the background clutching their stock certificates to their bosoms.

So many visitors demanded an introduction to the crowd that speeches were limited to half a minute. The cameramen ignored the endless bevy of orators, focusing their cameras instead on such movie beauties as Louise Fazenda, Mae Brooks, Gloria Hope, Shannon Day, May Busch, and others. These were the pictures which would "be shown in all

San Diego theaters next week and later will be broadcast throughout the entire country in news service reels." This promotion extraordinaire and its coverage resulted in substantial capital being raised.

Matters were progressing nicely during the first months of operation. Many important film stars expressed their desire to work at Grossmont as soon as all the buildings were completed, and during 1923, many independent producers completed their films there.

Then the inevitable problems arose. Renters argued over additional charges to adapt sets to their particular needs and didn't pay their rent when their films flopped, which was frequently. Meanwhile, construction expenses mounted and S-L's financial picture was becoming clouded. Only an occasional successful production kept enthusiasm up.

Spooky-Ookum

One of the successful productions was a two-reel comedy entitled "Spooky-Ookum" produced by Jim Aubrey who cast himself in the starring role along with a moon-eyed Zeigfield Follies girl named Rose Burdick. In mid-March of 1924, curious spectators assembled across the road from the newly-built Grossmont High School to watch the filming of a scene showing the couple in a Ford flivver stuck in a mud-hole during a rainstorm. The events were described in the *La Mesa Scout* issue dated March 21st:

> "An old fire engine from the San Diego Fire Department was brought to the scene earlier this week, but it couldn't even get up a head of steam and was replaced by fire trucks from El Cajon and La Mesa which did the Hatfield stuff in a satisfactory fashion. They took turns pumping water out of the flume through a dozen hoses with sprays attached which were turned on by assistants and principals on the sidelines.
>
> "The wind was furnished by an old dismantled airplane whose motor and propeller were still doing business. It was backed up to the scene, just in range of the cameras, and speeded up to create a breeze that made the rainstorm look as realistic as desired.
>
> "After numerous hearty and copious drenchings from the hoses, the fair actress was in a badly bedraggled and bespattered state what with standing around the sidelines much of the time drenched to the skin in a raw, cold wind with only a sloppy bathrobe for protection. She had the sympathy of the crowd, and undoubtedly

opened many eyes somewhat to the fact that perhaps the movie acting business after all isn't the fat salary, high-powered autos, wild and wooly hootch parties, and devious moral propositions as it is popularly conceived.

"At any rate, about 5 o'clock, after a particular thorough soaking in which she was water-logged and literally spattered with mud, she announced to the waiting world 'she was done, she'd had enough!' No one, even the director, seemed to gainsay her. In fact, the little manifestation of artistic temperament was wisely taken by the men folks as a gentle hint to depart, which they did."

Ambitious Mr. Sawyer, himself, was responsible for part of the financial dilemma S-L Studios faced in the closing years of 1924. Instead of using the income from the set rentals to upgrade equipment and build new sets, he used it to produce his own films. Invariably, the use of cameras and sets by Sawyer for his own movies conflicted with the needs of the renting producers causing many of them to cancel their leases. When word of this existing situation at S-L became widespread, the studio's reputation was tarnished to the point that prospective tenants were frightened away. The icing on the cake came when Sawyer's movies consistently failed to meet the expense of producing them.

Grossmont Studios, Inc.

The S-L bubble burst in 1925 and the studio was taken over by a new corporation called Grossmont Studios, Inc. The new company was capitalized for $200,000 which, in simplest terms, meant that S-L Studio's stockholders' original investment of $400,000 suddenly was worth just half the amount they had paid four years earlier. They weren't too pleased, but the new studio promised better times ahead and "in justice to the stockholders, Ed Fletcher was prevailed upon to take charge." Since he owned the land on which the studio was located his suggestion that Sawyer depart couldn't be ignored and his selection as the man in charge was automatic.

Fletcher's promise for better times with him in charge developed a hollow ring a few days after the studio began operations in February of 1925 when he signed a 5-year lease with the San Diego Cinema Company giving them active management of the facility along with an option to buy it at the expiration of the lease. Management of the studio changed two or three times over the course of the next two years as the earlier appeal of Grossmont was dimmed by the tremendous growth of the film industry in Hollywood.

In an attempted resurrection in late 1927, San Diego Photo Plays, Inc., began production of their first two-reeler entitled *Over Here.* J. Stuart Blackton, president, stated "this is but the start of a series of 36 films which will be made by our company at Grossmont."

Blackton, son of one of the pioneers of the film industry, apparently was one of the many people who didn't believe that sound movies could be satisfactorily developed for years to come. But only weeks after he announced his schedule of new films, a movie entitled *The Jazz Singer* starring Al Jolson was released and the era of silent films was over.

The expense of re-equipping the studio for sound and the rapid advance of Hollywood as the movie center of the world sounded the death knell for Grossmont's hope of becoming a "moving picture town."

The main studio building ultimately was converted into a skating rink, then a dine-dance pavilion. It was destroyed by a fire of incendiary origin on October 5, 1934.

Early movie companies moved their entire operations to new background settings and built false fronts for buildings.

A story about Grossmont would be incomplete without mention of Grossmont Hospital. The ever-expanding facility was not part of Grossmont's early development nor was it built on the original property developed by Ed Fletcher and William Gross as Grossmont. However, its beauty and reputation serves to perpetuate the name of Grossmont at a time when many people aren't sure what the name represents.

GROSSMONT HOSPITAL

Brief History

In 1947, the Suburban Hospital Committee was formed by concerned citizens to explore the growing needs for a health facility in the eastern county. At that time, only the La Mesa Community Hospital with 34 beds served the 70,000 people in the area. After approval was secured by the San Diego Boundaries Commission regarding the area that could be included in a hospital district, the organization began to seriously search for a possible hospital site.

On January 7, 1952, it was announced that a Grossmont Hospital District had been overwhelmingly approved by voters at forty polling stations the day before. The newly formed District immediately announced a plan to create a 100 bed facility costing $2,000,000 to be owned by residents of the district. In May of 1952, the district was assured that it was on the priority list for state and federal funding, and by July 1st it would learn exactly what its position was and the amount of assistance it could expect.

Matters were progressing so well that a feeling persisted that some misfortune was sure to come. It did. On August 5, 1952 newspaper headlines read: "Earthquake at Bakersfield!" This affected the plans for Grossmont Hospital because the State Hospital Advisory Board was forced to reject Grossmont Hospital's application for federal funds which suddenly were needed to repair damage to hospitals in and around Bakersfield. Its high priority position of number five was temporarily held in abeyance.

Despite the financial setback, Mr. Homer Streich said, "work on the new hospital will not be delayed. There is much work to be done, land to be purchased and plans to be presented before the time that federal funds will be released."

Investigation into building sites continued and after careful consideration of four sites, property north of La Mesa was selected and purchased for $35,000.

In December of 1952 another setback to the Hospital's progress was indicated by the headlines: "Hospital Chances Not Good." This referred to Proposition 20 which passed in recent elections making all non-profit

Original Architect's sketch of Grossmont Hospital

hospitals eligible for state and federal funds. Formerly, Grossmont was one of twenty groups eligible; now it was one of 200!

By March of 1954, final approval of the GHD loan applications were approved and plans released to responsible bidders. Trepte Construction was awarded the building contract with a low bid of $1,205,000. On April 27, ground breaking ceremonies were held and "there was enthusiasm a-plenty as the first spadeful of earth was turned marking the actual beginning of the hospital."

By October, forty-five percent of construction had been completed and by the end of 1954 construction still was ahead of schedule when a labor dispute threatened to stall matters and affect the projected opening scheduled for August of 1955. Eventually the union problem was solved and by May, construction was nearing completion. A tentative schedule for receiving the first patient was set for August 1, but one more labor strike was destined to hit and cause a slight delay until August 15th.

On August 22, all efforts were rewarded with the announcement that the appropriations from the state and federal governments were in hand in the amount of $1,173,734. Chosen from 142 applications, Grossmont Hospital was one of eight hospitals receiving aid for construction in their respective communities.

A bond election for $800,000 more funding was set for October. It passed by an eight to one margin. One of the most modern hospitals was about ready for business.

The Medical Staff

Several years before the official opening of Grossmont Hospital, fourteen physicians and surgeons met to form the nucleus of a medical staff. By 1952 the group had increased to one hundred members with Dr. William T. Soldman as Chief of Staff. When the hospital doors opened on August 15, 1955, working procedures had been organized and rules and regulations established for the self-governing medical staff which, by then, had reached 500 members.

By 1964, the hospital medical staff numbered 611 professional men and women including 54 members of the dental staff.

By 1970, 800 members were divided into 139 on the active staff, 539 on the courtesy staff, 10 on the consulting staff, 71 on the dental staff, 38 associates and 3 honorary members.

And still the staff continued to grow. In 1972, there were 800 medical members. It was a team formed to approve the work of many

After careful consideration of four sites, the property above in north La Mesa was selected and purchased for $35,000. Ground breaking began in May of 1954.

different departments of medicine during a period of rapidly increasing hospital facilities. Medicare programs had to be organized to function smoothly. A "disaster plan" had to be revised and continually upgraded. And emergency room facilities had to be improved to accomodate any new problems and solve them expeditiously.

As time passed, the enlarged hospital facilities required a larger and more active staff until today — almost a half century since the original 14 physicians and surgeons met to form the nucleus of the proposed Grossmont Hospital — their numbers are well over 900 members including 632 on the active list.

A year and 3 months after ground breaking ceremonies, the hospital was opened to admit its first patient on August 15, 1955.

MADAME FAIR AND HER WOODEN AUTOMOBILE

Post Mortem for Bancroft's Helix Farms - The House Built on Bed Springs - The Wooden Automobile

After Hubert Howe Bancroft's death in 1918, his Helix Farms Spring Valley Plantation was allowed to gradually deteriorate and the estate was advertised for sale. Part was subdivided as the La Mesa Country Club Estates, but other parts went begging for buyers.

One of the few inquiries came from Mme. Camille Feher (pronounced "fair") de Vernet whose earlier theatrical successes had made her "the toast of Europe who met with tremendous ovations wherever she went." At the age of 16, she enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Hungarian Emperor, Franz Joseph, a royal connection that didn't diminish her opportunities in the theater. One critic noted that "not the least of the reasons for her rapid rise was, perhaps, the fact that those were the days of much bosom-heaving and all-out emoting; Camille, built along voluptuous lines, came well equipped in both departments."

To fulfill a promise to her dying mother to care for her invalid brother, Anthony, she was forced to give up her promising stage career. Without the theater, her money quickly dissipated and, in 1914, with Anthony growing weaker, the couple barely escaped from World War I and came to America where Anthony found part-time employment with the Ford Motor Company in Detroit. But the eastern winters proved too severe, and the couple moved to Los Angeles in 1923. While there, they learned that considerable acreage of fruit-growing farmland was available in Spring Valley for little money. The land was part of "the great ranch that once belonged to the defunct historian, Bancroft, that is being cut up into small segments and offered for sale at laughingly low prices. The center section with its twenty-three royal palms and ancient adobe homestead is particularly desirable."

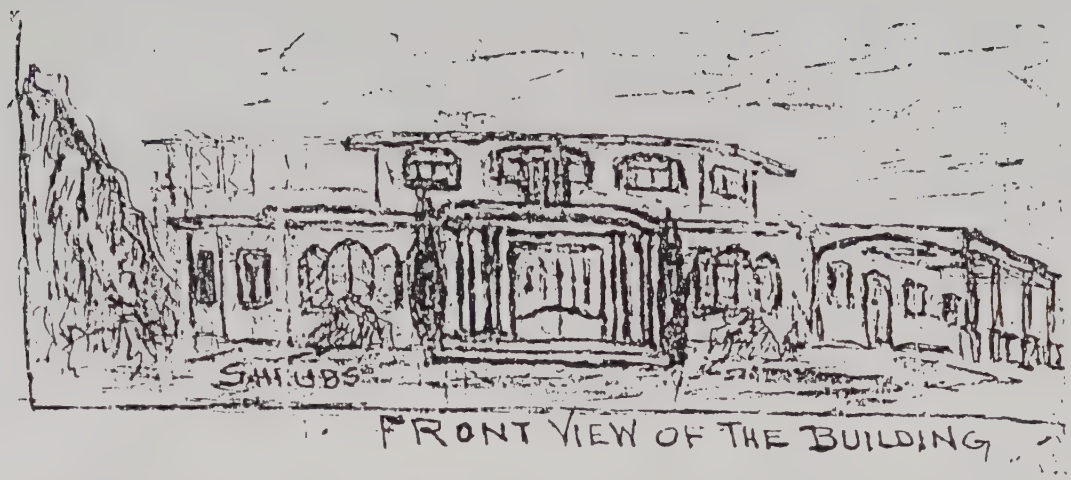
The parcel that included the Bancroft House was open for inspection the following Sunday, and Camille and Anthony were on hand bright and early. It was love at first sight. Camille had noted in another promotional pamphlet that "the Bancroft acres, squatting in a wilderness of tropical flora, stretched from Mount Helix and its open-air theater to the far slopes of Grossmont where Ernestine Schumann-Heink lived on a

This painting of Madame Fair at the age of sixteen was commissioned by the Hungarian Emporer Franz Joseph with whom she was enjoying an intimate relationship. His influence gave rise to her meteoric success on the European theatrical stage.

vast crumbling estate. . ." (The Schumann-Heink estate was less than a dozen years old, not crumbling).

She had met the great Schumann-Heink years before in Paris and didn't hesitate to pay a call, partly to renew an old acquaintance and also to ask a few pertinent questions. If the famous singer would recommend living in this remote paradise, the glowing reports of the land agents must be real. Their conversation convinced Camille to buy the land.

However, because of Anthony's frail physical condition, they were unable to move to Spring Valley until the following March. They had planned to move directly into the old Bancroft adobe, but much to their dismay, when they arrived they were told the house was just outside the boundary of their land. The sales agent apologized for the "slight misunderstanding" and offered to sell them the house for an additional $2,000 — a figure that was twice as much as the original deal.



Deathly afraid of earthquakes, Camille and Anthony built their house on top of old bedsprings they salvaged from dump sites. Years later when the structure was razed, the bedsprings were found . . . flattened.

They had no alternative other than building a new house next to the Bancroft adobe, a site just south of today's Harmony Lane in Spring Valley. Anthony had heard that the area was subject to earthquakes and thus designed their house to sit on a foundation made of old bed springs he and Camille collected from the nearby scrap heaps. Years later when the house was torn down to make way for new apartments, the old bed springs were discovered — flattened and useless.

The cost of the building almost depleted their savings, and to generate some income, they decided to sell fruit. They planted saplings, but before fruit matured, the cost of water made the idea unprofitable. To exist, they took a second mortgage on the house. On the brighter side, working outdoors improved Anthony's health to the point where he felt physically able to renew contacts he previously had made in Los Angeles. The expense of the bus fare was problem enough, but reaching the San Diego bus terminal from Spring Valley was an even greater problem.

They considered the purchase of a used car, but the demand for cars far exceeded the supply, and the prices were unrealistic. Again, Anthony's creative ingenuity came into play. He built his own car, carving the frame from scraps of lumber left over from construction of the house. He relied on Camille to scout about the local junk yards for an engine, wheels, and other usable parts of the power train. Within a month, the wooden car was completely assembled.

Its maiden voyage was not without mishap. With Anthony at the controls and Camille alongside, the strange vehicle gathered speed and as it approached the first turn, a door swung open and Camille was

deposited ingloriously in the dirt. After a few days, her bruises were healed and the problem with the door was corrected.

For each outing of their automobile, Camille would dress for the occasion, always sporting a wide-brimmed hat decorated with flowing ostrich feathers which all but engulfed her four-foot ten-inch body. Underneath the hat were ringlets of tightly knotted hair and thick layers of caked make-up that masked her face. Camille would wave graciously to anyone who came within sight and her friendly attitude prevented any ridicule which could be expected from her unusual appearance reminiscent of a stage actress of the 1880s.

During the first years of the Great Depression, few things were amusing or exciting. One exception that caught everyone's attention was a homemade wooden automible chugging down Campo Road in Spring Valley carrying "Madame Fair," a fleshy little lady in her later years bedecked in a frilly white gown and big Gainsborough hat with its white ostrich feather covering her headful of tightly knotted curls.

BEGINNINGS OF MOUNT HELIX

Helix Joins Grossmont - The McClurken Mystery Mansion- The Hansen House - Helix Nature Theater - Helix Lake - Mount Helix Estates.

Sir James Hilary scaled Mount Everest "because it was there." But that wasn't sufficient reason for local pioneers to bother climbing the chaparral-matted rocky slopes of Mount Helix until the turn of this century. One of the adventuresome souls who ventured up the mountain at that time was a man named James Parks McClurken who discovered that, along with its natural beauty, there was an abundance of black loamy soil which, when coupled with the temperate climate, would undoubtedly provide an unsurpassed environment for farming. Particularly winter farming.

The Stone and Timber Act made acquisition of land a simple procedure. It stated that any government land deemed worthless, i.e., land the government wasn't using and nobody else wanted, could be claimed for a nominal subscription fee. Mount Helix fell into that category. Thus Mr. McClurken was able to acquire 1,200 acres of land for $1.20 per acre. He planted wheat and string beans on the level sections of the mountainside property.

Technically, Mount Helix came into existence with McClurken's recorded deed in 1902, the same year its twin cousin, Grossmont, was acquired by Bill Gross and Ed Fletcher. But unfortunately, it had to wait for roads to be built and utilities brought to the Grossmont summit, then extended to the Mount Helix summit before its development could proceed in an organized manner.

Helix Joins Grossmont

By 1916, Ed Fletcher had acquired a large part of Mount Helix land adjacent to his Grossmont Park subdivisions that included the inspirational summit site. During the following years, however, he was unable to devote his full time to the development of the new addition because of his heavy commitments to major water and highway projects along with other land developments.

Thus, until the early twenties, activities on Mount Helix were limited to a few winter vegetable plots and several experimental avocado

groves, most of which were located at the head of the canyon between Grossmont and Helix where some irrigation water was available. Peter Panos, affectionately known as "the Greek," cultivated twenty acres there and J. J. Sieberling of auto tire fame also leased thirty acres on the western slope of Mount Helix.

The McClurken Mystery Mansion

John McClurken had given up on his hope of making a fortune by planting string beans on the eastern side of Helix years before and allowed his property to pass along to his son, Jonathan. Jonathan, in turn, allowed the land to remain idle until the depression forced him to sell a large part of it, excluding the most attractive building site on the summit of a knoll. Again, the property lay dormant until the interruption of World War II had dissipated.

At that time, Jonathan began construction of an 8,300 square foot mansion featuring an extensive and dramatic application of used bricks salvaged from the original San Diego Gas Works building after its demolition. Unexpectedly, personal problems beset Jonathan and he was forced to sell the partially finished structure. Not to be outdone, the new owner also became embroiled in marital problems and had to dispose of the home which, by then, was two-thirds completed. Work ceased, and for the next twenty years the seemingly-forgotten house resembled an abandoned brick palace, a happy place for nocturnal visitations and an inviting prey for vandals. Yet, even in its unfinished state, it stood out impressively along the skyline — like a big question mark.

Ed Fletcher visiting at the Hansen house in the 1940's.

The longer it idled away in emptiness, the stronger people's curiosity became and soon it was being referred to as "the Mystery House of Mount Helix." In the late 1970s, legal entanglements were resolved and construction resumed. The beautiful home shed its cloak of mystery and became a real-life showplace.

In the early 1920s, the decision of Fred J. Hansen to build a handsome estate on the western slope of Mount Helix roused the mountain from a long period of slumber and ignited a period of rapid growth.

The Hansen House

Three important developments happened during the mid-twenties that roused Mount Helix from its long slumber and began a period of rapid growth. One was the decision of Fred J. Hansen to build a handsome estate on the western slope of the mountain, a home which provided a prototype for future residential construction.

Mr. Hansen's business trips as a partner in the Cyclone Fence Company of Winnetka, Illinois, had taken him to every state in the Union and many times around the world. Thus, his choice of California was not an off-the-cuff selection. After he had chosen California as the site of his future home, he criss-crossed every section of the state by automobile and finally concluded that "there was no place in the state with a stronger appeal, and no other spot so exactly suited for a country estate than Mount Helix."

On March 25, 1925, the *La Mesa Scout* reported, "Mr. Hansen purchased eight acres on one of the most sightly knolls of the summit of

Mr. Hansen concluded that "there is no other spot in the state with stronger appeal no other spot so exactly suited for a country estate than Mount Helix." Note the cross in the background, far left.

Helix and midway between it and Grossmont. From the summit of this knoll, Mr. Hansen commands a marvelous panoramic view of the entire range of the Cuyamacas west to the bay, barely excelled from the summits of higher peaks on each side."

The article continued: "There he will build his beautiful home on which construction will begin shortly. It is to be a one-story structure with seven rooms built on the Brittany-Spanish style. He is sparing no expense to have everything at hand. He has secured expert advice in laying out the orchard and the selection of trees, and he has piped the entire tract with two-inch pipe to secure ample water, and he has tapped the Helix main with another two-inch pipe to his residence thus assuring abundant pressure from the 50,000 gallon tank on the summit several hundred feet away. He will shortly install electric lights and, later, gas as the main is but a short distance away on Grossmont."

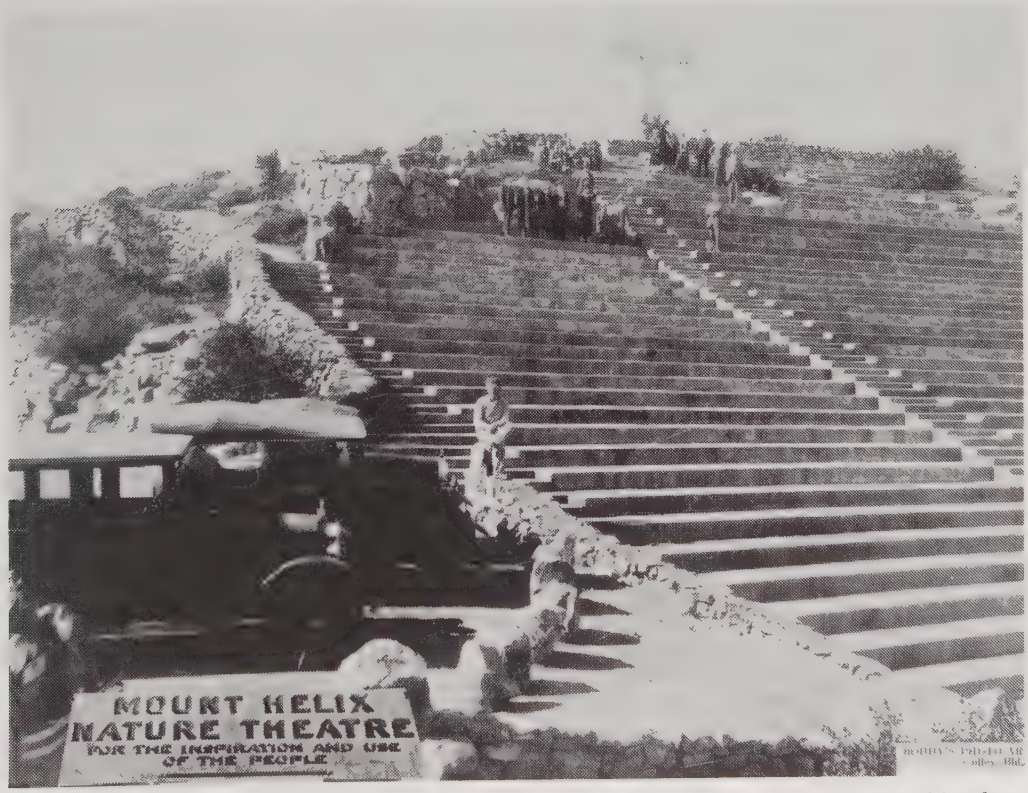
The Helix Nature Theatre

A second and most significant attraction to appear on Mount Helix was the Nature Theatre, completed in 1925. The park, featuring a stately white cross stretching 35-feet into the sky from the mountain's highest peak, was finished in March, and electricity for its illumination arrived the next month. Earlier, water arrived at the site from a new pump-station allowing extensive plantings of exotic imported shrubs to continue.

The tradition of Easter Sunrise Services in the local area began at tiny Mount Nebo in neighboring La Mesa. But by 1917, Mount Nebo could no longer accommodate La Mesa's rapidly growing population and the ceremonies were transferred to the summit of Mount Helix. These interim affairs necessarily were primitive with tops of boulders serving as the best seating accommodations for the weary climbers who managed to stagger up the narrow trails to the summit.

Helix Lake

The third progressive step in the development of Mount Helix occurred in 1927 with the construction of Helix Reservoir in the shallow valley separating Grossmont and Mount Helix.



The Mount Helix Nature Theatre was built as a memorial to Mary Carpenter Yawkey by her daughter, Mary Yawkey White.

Helix Lake as it appeared in September of 1951, before it was drained, relined, and refilled to make room for surrounding residential estates.

The pretty little lake, nicely landscaped, was never intended to supply water to adjacent property but rather to serve as a reservoir providing a gravitational flow of water down the narrow canyon at its western end to the city of La Mesa where it increased fire protection and improved local domestic water service. Although Grossmont and Mount Helix received no direct benefit of an increased water supply, the lake aesthetically complimented the beauty of the two mountains and, as a relaxing recreational area of sorts, enhanced land values in the vicinity.

The $35,000 construction job required five months to complete. The first water that poured forth into the dry lake bed on August 5, 1927, was pumped through an 18" pipe from the Grossmont and Eucalyptus reservoirs, the latter located a mile away. Fifty three million gallons were captured by the earthen filled dam which was strengthened by a concrete core measuring 225 feet at it base and tapering to six feet at the top.

Over the years as the technology of water systems advanced, the old-fashioned gravity-type "pressurized" reservoirs were gradually phased out. By the 1950s, Helix Lake's importance was reduced as it became economically feasible for La Mesa to utilize the enlarged reservoir behind

The lake was drained completely, lined and reformed.

After the lake was refilled, construction of beautiful homes around its perimeter began.

Grossmont High School. Helix Lake became a seldom-used recreational park of sorts. The water level dropped to a near-vanishing point and the vegetation remained unattended.

In the early 1960s, architects, engineers, and designers of the Kenneth Golden Construction Company envisioned an exclusive residential colony where the deteriorating lake then stood. It would feature twenty-six elaborate homes around the refilled lake, most with private water frontage. And so the developers bought the 60-acre parcel of land.

When plans for the new subdivision were announced, the usual opposition organized. The hue and cry, "Save Our Lake!" sounded like a legitimate appeal, but it didn't impress the court when the almost-dry, run-down reservoir was inspected. Environmentalists failed to convince anyone other then themselves that the scrubby underbrush which had been planted thirty-five years earlier was rare and endangered plant life. With the opposition squelched, construction of Helix Lake soon was underway.

Less than two years later, critics who anticipated a tract-housing development that would blemish the natural character of the area were quick to concede that the restored lake was more beautiful than before — and the high quality homes with their finely manicured gardens greatly enhanced the overall aesthetic appeal of Grossmont and Mount Helix. The few neighboring land-owners who were boisterous in their earlier criticism suddenly were no longer vociferous when the attractive subdivision was completed. The increase of all property values in the vicinity because of the Helix Lake Estates had a tranquilizing effect.

Mount Helix Estates

Not every grand idea put forth in the development of Mount Helix worked out. Nudged in between the construction of Fred Hansen's beautiful showplace on the Helix summit, the completion of the Nature Theatre, and the damming of little Helix Lake was the announcement of a proposed $800,000 subdivision entitled "Mount Helix Estates." The project involved 560 acres of land extending from today's Campo Road in Spring Valley up the southern and western slope of Mount Helix.

Mount Helix Estates was an entirely different concept than Grossmont's "Colony for Artists" conceived fifteen years earlier. During the time in between, the twin mountains had become readily accessible — in 1910, only a single road wound up to the Grossmont summit; by 1926 both Grossmont and Mount Helix were traversed by a network of scenic roads with continuing improvements underway.

Also, great strides had been made in highway construction. In 1910, only a "sophisticated wagon trail" (today's University Avenue) connected the mountains with San Diego while in 1926, it was "only a twenty minute drive from the business section of San Diego to the new subdivision by way of either Lemon Grove or La Mesa."

The ability to more readily commute to town allowed the homes of Mount Helix Estates to be built to serve as full-time residences for those people working in town. Consequently, the proposed houses were designed as pretentious structures, not small redwood cottages to be used as week-end retreats.

The developers, Malcom & Company of San Diego, planned "to create at least 75 to 100 estates ranging from three to twenty acres, each occupying either a magnificent knoll with an unobstructive view of the Pacific Ocean fifteen miles away, or a warm southern exposure gazing down on some sunlit valley." It was required that any home built in the subdivision would have a minimum cost of $10,000, a very tidy sum during that time. The promoters insisted that any residence be "as elaborate as those of Pasadena and other exclusive cities."

They added, "it is generally conceded that such a project will fill the crying needs of our city." Whether that observation was true or not, few people were financially able to take advantage of the Mount Helix "opportunity," and fewer still who could justify a move away from town where cheaper property was available in abundance.

Sales progressed slowly during the first three years. Then in 1929, the Crash dampened whatever enthusiasm was left. Despite the failure of Mount Helix Estates, the optimistic program established a tone for future building on the mountain.

Mount Helix

Location

Calavo Gardens

Quality **Beauty**

—

The fact that the above are being embodied in this property is becoming more and more apparent.

In Addition, This Is An Outstanding

Income Proposition

—

F.J. Hansen Organization

Bank of Southern California Building

LA MESA **PHONE 49**

REAL ESTATE, INVESTMENTS, INSURANCE

Planted Avocado Income Properties

Fred Hansen retired as a partner in the Cyclone Fence Company of Winnetka, Illinois, but quickly returned to active business life after he settled in his new Mount Helix estate.

THE HALLMARK OF MOUNT HELIX

A Gift to the County - Thanksgiving Sunset Services - The Wayside Inn

A natural amphitheater beneath a towering, 35-foot cross is the spectacular hallmark of the Grossmont-Mount Helix area. The outline of the majestic symbol perched atop the highest of the two mountain peaks is clearly visible for many miles in every direction. And, when it is lighted at night, it stands out like a giant illuminated sentinel sparkling against the blackness of the sky.

Originally baptized the "Helix Nature Theatre," it now is more often referred to simply as "the Cross" where the annual Easter Sunrise Services are presented. As noted, the first Easter Sunrise Service in the local area was held at a tiny circular park atop La Mesa's Mount Nebo in 1915 and repeated the following year. After Ed Fletcher acquired a large part of Mount Helix in 1916, he suggested that its summit would be more adequate for future services which, presumably, would increase in popularity and attendance as the community developed. La Mesa civic groups concurred wholeheartedly, and arrangements for the first Mount Helix Sunrise Services in 1917 were made. For the next seven years while the project was being completed, the performances were simple with only a rugged pathway to the top and no seating accommodations other than a couple of hastily constructed wooden platforms and the tops of many boulders throughout the area.

During the years of 1918 and 1919, everyone was preoccupied with the events of World War I and its aftermath, and improvements to the Nature Theater were sluggish, limited to clearing underbrush and widening the trail up the mountainside which, until then, was a narrow walkway identified only by red ribbons attached to shrubs to outline its route.

The summit of Mount Helix remained as a place of peaceful solitude during those first years, interrupted only by rather primitive observances of special holidays such as Easter. Occasionally, a handful of people who lived nearby would venture to the top to enjoy the exciting panoramas. One of these visitors particularly enamored by the magnificent natural attractions was Mary Carpenter Yawkey. She was the mother of Mary Yawkey White whose husband, Fred, managed the Benson Lumber Company in San Diego, and, with Ed Fletcher, was a co-investor in several Mount Helix properties.

Architect's drawing of the Open Air Nature theatre built by Mrs. F.M. White and C.C. Yawkey at Mount Helix, California. Requa and Jackson, Architects.

Mary Carpenter Yawkey passed away in 1923. Events soon after her death are best explained by Ed Fetcher in his *Memoirs:*

> "One day Mary Yawkey White came into my office and asked if I would sell her the top of Mount Helix. I thought she was joking and told her that Mr. Frank Sieberling, president of Sieberling Tire Company, had offered me $25,000 for same but I refused it for the few acres on top of Mount Helix. With tears in her eyes at my answer, she told me that her brother, Cyrus Yawkey of Wausau (owner of the Boston Red Sox baseball team), wished to build as a memorial to her mother a Nature Theater where we had previously held many Easter Services.
>
> "After discussing it with your mother (Mary Fletcher), we decided to donate the property to the county for this purpose with the result that they (the Whites) hired a splendid architect to design the present Nature Theater, costing in excess of $100,000, and they also gave $30,000 in bonds to the Supervisors of San Diego County, the interest on which maintains the Nature Theater. Ed Jr., assisted in the construction of the theater, particularly of the cross and for many years was the custodian without pay in the planting and development of same.

In 1917, Easter Sunrise Services were transferred from tiny Mount Nebo to the Summit of Mount Helix. In 1923, the addition of a privately financed commerative park — The Nature Theatre — was completed in 1925.

Those who braved the hike up the mountain were forced to undergo the inconvenience of standing throughout the ceremonies unless they were one of the fortunate few able to find an uninhabited boulder to sit on. Note the interim wooden cross.

Above - Unidentified man pointing out planned features of the Nature Theatre to Mary Yawkey White.

Left - Mrs. White describing the future Nature Theatre to friend while children investigate the area where the stage will be situated.

Below - Early stages of construction were frequently observed by the Fletchers (at far left) and others.

"Thus, Mary Yawkey White, Cyrus Yawkey, and Frank White gave to San Diego County the most unique and attractive lasting gift that San Diego County has today."

The huge white cross with its concrete substructure, the theater's native granite rock walls, the parking area, and access roads were completed by April, 1925, and the first Easter Sunrise Service in the new then-completed Nature Theatre were held that year with 7,000 sleepy people in attendance.

Mary Yawkey White passed away in 1928. At that time, her husband Fred White assigned all family interests and/or rights to the Nature Theatre to the County of San Diego.

As construction of Mount Helix Nature Theatre got underway, four of the five principals most instrumental in its creation sat down for a picnic lunch to proudly survey activities. Not present is Ed Fletcher who, presumably, snapped this 1923 photograph. At the far left is Fred White, prominent San Diego businessman and owner of several Mount Helix properties, who supplied the money for construction and subsequent maintenance. At his right is George Marston, always heavily involved in any civic beautification or cultural improvement program. Across the table is Mary Yawkey White whose desire to build a memorial for her mother was the direct reason for the bold venture. At far right is Mary Fletcher who, with husband Ed, donated the choice summit site on which the Nature Theatre was built. Together, this group "gave San Diego the most unique and attractive gift that San Diego County has today."

Thanksgiving Sunset Services

The Mount Helix Easter Sunrise Service became a popular event almost instantly; the Mount Helix Thanksgiving Sunset Service received little attention and was discontinued within two years.

The reason for the demise of the evening presentation was because Thanksgiving, in those early days, was not an automatic work holiday. The promoter realized that it would be almost impossible for workers in San Diego to reach Mount Helix before the sunset. And starting the program after sunset had certain disadvantages, the most obvious being the inability of the audience to appreciate the colorful Thanksgiving pageant in the relative darkness.

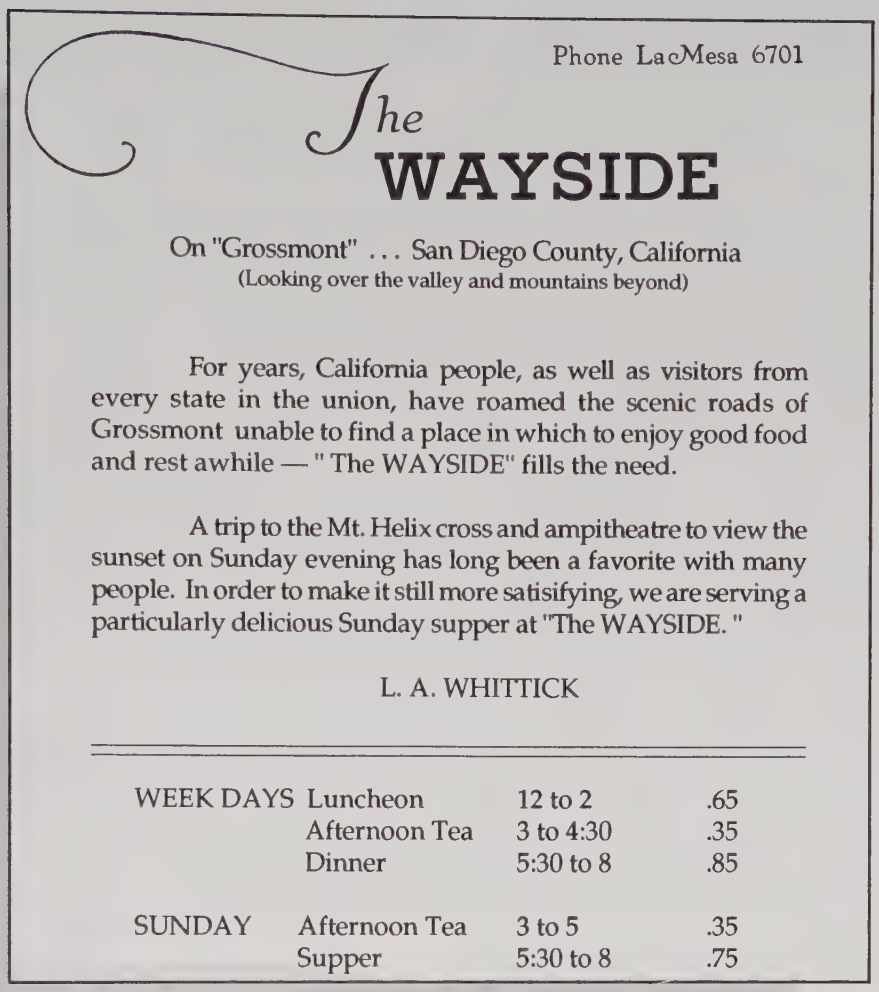
Thus, the first Thanksgiving Sunset Service was held on November 20, 1927, the Sunday before Thanksgiving to allow everyone to leisurely reach the site in time for the late afternoon performance in sunlight. Everyone could enjoy "the finest music available, an inspiring and spectacular pageant, and an exceptional speaker" in daylight hours. The initial performance, chaired by Fred Hansen and assisted by Havrah Hubbard, Wallace Moody, and others, began at 4:00 p.m. and "climaxed as the sun sunk into the western sea."

Unfortunately, the light attendance reflected the fact that it was unreasonable to expect the true spirit of Thanksgiving to take hold three days before the holiday arrived.

The second year was more successful than the first. The presentation of the historical play, *The Voice of the Ages*, suggested that the idea of an evening pageant might be accepted after all. But the next year, the depression came crashing down causing attendance to drop off sharply as fewer people had things to be thankful for. And so the Thanksgiving Sunset Services at Mount Helix passed into history.

The Wayside Inn

Terrible economic conditions after the '29 Crash forced most people to seek out recreational activities that were free or cost very little. A visit to the Mount Helix Nature Theater fit the bill and before long more and more cars were chugging and twisting their way up the mountain to enjoy the Helix Cross. The traffic passed directly by the home of Mr. & Mrs. L. A. Whittick and sparked an idea in their minds. Why not open a tea room to accommodate the increasing number of passers-by? They leased a plot of ground from Ed Fletcher on Helix Drive and began construction of their "Wayside Inn."



Phone LaMesa 6701

The WAYSIDE

On "Grossmont" ... San Diego County, California
(Looking over the valley and mountains beyond)

For years, California people, as well as visitors from every state in the union, have roamed the scenic roads of Grossmont unable to find a place in which to enjoy good food and rest awhile — "The WAYSIDE" fills the need.

A trip to the Mt. Helix cross and ampitheatre to view the sunset on Sunday evening has long been a favorite with many people. In order to make it still more satisifying, we are serving a particularly delicious Sunday supper at "The WAYSIDE."

L. A. WHITTICK

WEEK DAYS	Luncheon	12 to 2	.65
	Afternoon Tea	3 to 4:30	.35
	Dinner	5:30 to 8	.85
SUNDAY	Afternoon Tea	3 to 5	.35
	Supper	5:30 to 8	.75

Sadly, the tea room idea failed, strangled by the depressed times. An entry in the family journal dated September 10, 1933, noted that "the family commenced dismantling the tea room." Mrs. Whittick was disappointed but not discouraged and in 1935 she revived the idea as economic conditions generally were beginning to show signs of improvement. This time, however, she decided to "serve teas and suppers in her home," thus avoiding the large initial expenses that caused the first venture to falter.

The journal noted that on August 26, 1935, "The Wayside Inn sign arrived," and on October 9th "the first dollar was taken in at Wayside." In November, "the tea room was open" but business was not exactly brisk, "comprised mostly of friends."

By then, times were changing and the newness of the Helix Nature Theatre had worn off and attracted fewer visitors. Passing traffic decreased. The isolated location of Whittick's Tea Room was too great a handicap to overcome, and the Wayside Inn was abandoned.

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE • WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1992

Mt. Helix cross, land deeded to private group

MARY CURRAN-DOWNEY
Staff Writer

Ownership of the Mount Helix cross and the land beneath it shifted yesterday the county to the San Diego Histor- but opponents of the move over.

of a similar de- ...ng Ci...

been outspoken on the need to remove the cross, Hills noted that the plaintiff the Mount Helix suit is a Catholi-

"We are trying to mak the ...ll is not an...

After the death of Mary White in 1927, her husband established a trust fund designed to offset future maintenance costs of the Nature Theatre including the Cross located on land previously given to San Diego County by the Fletcher Family. It was assumed that this arrangement provided cost-free ownership with no future tax burden for local citizens. Despite these precautions, years later activist groups claimed the Cross, as a religious symbol, was being supported illegally by the County and the courts concurred, ordering it torn down. To avoid this tragedy, the Cross was returned to private ownership in 1992.

(Above) - In 1917 when the Easter Sunrise Service was moved from Mount Nebo in La Mesa to Mount Helix, a simple wooden cross was erected for the ceremony.

(Below) - After Mary Carpenter Yawkey's death in 1923, the wooden cross was replaced by a concrete cross to serve as an identifying symbol highlighting the Nature Theatre.

BACK TO THE WORLD OF REALITY

At the begining, everything associated with creation of the Helix Nature Theatre was inspired by positive circumstances.

To start, the selected site on the summit of Mount Helix, encircled by exciting panoramas, went unchallenged for its beauty. Its purpose was to serve as a memorial to a grand lady who often visited the heights for pensive meditation during the 'teens. Built strictly as a non-commercial venture, the land was donated to the County of San Diego despite the existence of a large cash offer to purchase it. And after construction was completed, a trust was established to provide a permanent maintenance program at no expense to the county.

Yes, everything proceeded on a positive note . . . no red tape, no interrupting controversies, no labor strife among largely volunteer workers. During its construction, capacity audiences offered no complaints about the trek up the mountainside and the inconvenience of temporarily using boulders in lieu of better seating arrangements while enjoying the original Easter Sunrise Services.

When the 35-foot high concrete Cross replaced the original wooden Cross, the Nature Theatre received its crowning glory. But idyllic perfection, natural or hand-made, invariably will come crashing down to the cruel world of reality, sooner or later.

Changing Times

Only a year and a half after the official completion of the Theatre in 1925, an incident occurred that suggested the future would have to face up to unpleasant events to go along with its already established happy surroundings. It was an encounter involving John Dahl who was staying at the new Helix home of his brother -in- law, Fred Hansen.

As Dahl was enjoying a casual stroll one evening, he noticed an unfamiliar automobile parked on the road leading to the Nature Theatre. He approached the vehicle and recognizing that the two occupants "were under the influence," ordered them to move on. But rather than retreating back down the mountain, the drunks drove to the summit where they encountered "two middle-aged women sightseers who were examining the plant life at the upper level." Conditions seemed apropos

for a pleasant assault on the ladies. But instead of meekly submitting, the women screamed bloody murder bringing their husbands rushing to their assistance. The end of the fiasco saw the visiting foursome taken to Paradise Valley Sanitarium and the two inebriates escaping down the mountain.

This mild altercation is important because it signalled the fact that on that day of April 10, 1927, the Helix Nature Theatre was first introduced to the negative side of life. And as the years rolled by, more unpleasantries appeared. The "flower children" of the 1960s found it an appealing place for their psychodelic activities. Occasionally, noisy gatherings of other unappreciative groups discovered the beauty of the area much to the displeasure of the neighboring residents.

But the positive appeal of the Nature Theatre not only survived such expected events by accepting some minor adjustments to their curriculum such as an earlier evening closing time and actually enjoyed a dramatic increase in popularity as the Easter Sunrise Services gained national recognition.

During the closing years of the 20th century, the most startling development of all broke into the news. A small group spearheaded by the American Civil Liberties Union brought suit against the County of San Diego demanding the Nature Theatre's Cross be removed! Ownership of the religious symbol by a public agency, they claimed, was unconstitutional and a local judge concurred. After touching the hearts of so many people during its sixty- five years of existence, the court ordered it torn down within 90 days.

Paradoxically, when Ed Fletcher and the White family donated the Nature Theatre and its majestic Cross to the county, they believed it would be protected from any possible unscrupulous manipulations by privateers in the future. Yet this very act nearly caused its demise.

At the last hour, the cross and a fifteen foot circular parcel of land around it was given to the San Diego Historical Society and ownership passed from public hands. The Cross was saved to live another day . . .